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# SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROJECT (SFMP)

A Compilation of USAID/Ghana Sustainable  
Fisheries Management Project Success  
Stories: 2014- 2021



APRIL 2021

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# ACRONYMS

AOR	Authorized Officer Representative
CIC	Canoe Identification Card
CCM	Centre for Coastal Management (University of Cape Coast)
CEWEFIA	Central and Western Region Fishmongers Improvement Association
CLaT	Child Labor and Trafficking
CRC	Coastal Resource Center (University of Rhode Island)
DAA	Development Action Association
DOPA	Densu Oyster Pickers Association
FC	Ghana Fisheries Commission
GHC	Ghanian Cedis (currency)
GIS	Geographic Information System
GIFA	Ghana Inshore Fishermen's Association
GNCFC	Ghana National Canoe Fishermen's Council
ICFG	Integrated Coastal and Fisheries Governance Project
IUU	Illegal, Unreported, Unregulated
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MFI	Micro-Finance Institutions
MOFAD	Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development
NAFPTA	National Fish Processors and Traders Association
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SFMP	Sustainable Fisheries Management Project
SNV	Netherlands Development Organization
SSG	SSG Advisors
STWG	Scientific and Technical Working Group
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UCC	University of Cape Coast
URI	University of Rhode Island
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan
WARFP	West Africa Regional Fisheries Development Program

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# INTRODUCTION

Throughout the implementation of the USAID/Ghana Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (2014 to 2021) a variety of information, education and communication materials were produced. This document compiles “success stories” and “Telling Our Story” materials submitted to USAID as part of quarterly and annual reports as well as on topics of special interest. These stories are organized by the key themes of the project, as described in detail in the three-volume Lessons Learned report produced in 2021.

Readers should consult [Volume 1](#) for a description of the approach and accomplishments in Legal and Policy Reform, Co-Management and Constituency-Building, Science for Management and Institutional Strengthening. [Volume 2](#) covers Post-Harvest Improvements, Gender Mainstreaming and Combatting Child Labor and Trafficking. [Volume 3](#) covers Preventing the Spread and Mitigating the Effects of COVID-19 Among Vulnerable Households in Fishing Communities. All of the volumes also include links to selected reports on each topic.

Links to the full set of SFMP publications can be found in three archiving web sites:

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# **LEGAL AND POLICY REFORM**





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## Fisherman-to-Fisherman Dialogue Promises Reliable Future

The dialogues are encouraging fisherfolk to confront some of their communities' deep-rooted problems--such as over-fishing, weak enforcement, and non-compliance--that reduce the country's total fish catch.



**“This initiative, with support of fisherfolk, will aid the Fisheries Commission in carrying out its substantial regulatory responsibilities.”**

*Socrates Apetorgbor, Fisheries Specialist  
with SFMP*

Ghana's fisheries sector is a major contributor to socio-economic development and food security in the country, yet poverty remains high in many fishing communities as the sector continues to experience a growing number of challenges in managing its marine resources, particularly as fish stocks and catches decline. To help reverse stock depletion, the Fisherman-to-Fisherman Consultative Dialogue, sponsored by the Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council with the support of the USAID Sustainable Fisheries Management Project, is playing a supporting role in this grassroots effort.

The dialogue is encouraging fisherfolk to confront some of their communities' deep-rooted problems such as over-fishing, weak enforcement, and non-compliance with fishing regulations that reduce the country's total fish catch. Since 2016, regional dialogs have convened across Ghana's coastal communities. Over 170 Chief Fishermen from the Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council and 120 women leaders from the National Fish Processors and Traders Association have participated.

Discussions at the Consultative Dialogues centered on measures to reduce the excessive pressure on fish stocks, ensure that stocks within Ghana's fisheries are exploited within biologically sustainable levels, and ensure that new legislation can protect the nation's fisheries in the long term.

Fisherfolk across the four coastal regions have unanimously agreed to an additional fishing holiday in Ghana on Sunday, and they have embraced traditional practices aimed at promoting responsible fishing activities and increasing fish catch. Moreover, fish processors (predominantly women) have built consensus that they must reject illegally caught “bad fish” and report those who use chemicals to catch fish.

To support law-enforcement efforts and spur implementation of the National Fisheries Management Plan, Chief Fishermen in Volta Region have requested that the Fisheries Commission authorize them to make arrests where necessary. The request follows an occasion when those Chief Fishermen reported thirteen fishermen to the marine police for arrest and prosecution for practicing illegal light fishing.

These positive developments represent a grassroots effort to confront the crisis of fish-stock depletion in Ghana's waters. As indicated by the USAID Sustainable Fisheries Management Project's fisheries specialist, Socrates Apetorgbor, “This initiative, with support of fisherfolk, will aid the Fisheries Commission in carrying out its substantial regulatory responsibilities”.

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## USAID Supports Ghana's First Closed Season for Artisanal Fishers

**“We cannot sit and watch the collapse of the industry. We care about the future of the fishing industry and we really need to push hard for the alternative that is finally better for the sector and the people.”**



*Naa Afoley Quaye, Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development*

**“With the implementation of the closed season “for the first time there is greater stakeholder appreciation and public awareness of the closed season as a key measure for rebuilding the nation’s depleted fish stock. The closed season has generated public support and political will toward addressing the problem.”**

*Socrates Apetorgbor, Fisheries Specialist with SFMP*

**The fisheries sector in Ghana is beset** with overfishing, resulting in a dramatic depletion of stocks. The total landings of the small pelagic fish, primarily mackerel, sardines and anchovies, have decreased by 86 percent, from 138,955 Metric Tons in 1996 to 19,608 Metric Tons in 2016. As result, there has been a significant loss of income for households in more than 300 coastal communities who rely on fisheries as their primary source of livelihood. Small pelagics, are often referred to as ‘the people’s fish’ because they make up the majority of the animal protein intake for most Ghanaians. Over the past 10 years, the situation is becoming worse, making life more difficult for fisherfolk.

Nana Jojo Solomon, the secretary of the Ghana National Canoe Fishermen’s Council says, “The looming crisis of the artisanal fishery threatens economic growth in the sector and presents a potential internal security problem that directly affects the livelihoods of as many as 150,000 people involved in the marine fishery sector.”

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has been responding to the situation since 2015 through the Sustainable Fisheries Management Project, (SFMP), and in cooperation with the Fisheries Commission, to rebuild the nation’s depleted fish stocks. The initiative included the establishment of a Scientific and Technical Working Group in 2016 that provides scientific stock assessments and recommendations for sustainable fishing to the Commission. It brought together key stakeholders including scientists from the University of Cape Coast, University of Ghana, Fisheries Scientific Survey Division, representatives of local NGOs and representatives of the fishing industry associations.

A study by the working group projected a complete collapse of the people’s fish stock by 2020 without immediate actions. In line with the National Fisheries Management Plan, the Science and Technical Working Group recommended a closed season during August. This is the peak month when fish spawn and reproduce, thereby providing fish for future years.

The Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development responded, and through a series of dialogues with stakeholders, declared a closed season from May 15, to June 15 2019 for the artisanal and semi-industrial fleets and August 1 – September 30, 2019 for the industrial trawlers. Najih Lazar, an international fisheries scientist working with the project and a member of the scientific working group said, “With an annual closed season and eradication of illegal fishing methods, it is projected that the stock of the people’s fish will recover and landings will increase from the yearly landings of 19.608 metric tons recorded in 2016 to 90,000 metric tons per year by 2030 with an estimated value of US\$ 54 million”.

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# Fisheries Stakeholders Dialogue on Strategies Towards Rebuilding Dwindling Fish Stocks and Saving the Coastal Environment

**“I would like to express my gratitude to the United State Government and the United State Agency for International Development (USAID) for the financial support provided under the Feed the Future initiative which made it possible for our partners to organize this important event.”**



*Hon. Naa Afoley Quaye, Minister for Fisheries and Aquaculture Development*

**“The opportunity to share experiences, exchange ideas combined with presentations, plenary sessions and break-out working groups was useful and helped us to gain a deeper understanding of our work and provided the motivation to foster collaboration towards sustaining our livelihoods and the fisheries industry.”**

*Mike Abaka-Edu, Member, Ghana National Canoe Fishermen’s Council*

**More than 200 fisheries stakeholders** comprising government officials, private sector, researchers, scientists, fisher folk, civil society organizations, the media, academia, students and regional and international fisheries experts converged in Accra on August 19-21, 2019 for a national conference on fisheries and coastal environment to discuss opportunities and challenges associated with strategies and policies identified through research and practice to move Ghana’s dwindling fish stock towards the path to recovery. Landings of Ghana’s small pelagic fish stocks - mostly sardines, anchovies and mackerel - have decreased sharply in the last two decades with the current landings hovering around 10 percent of the maximum realized in 1997.

The conference was organized by USAID Sustainable Fisheries Management Project and the University of Cape Coast’s Fisheries and Coastal Management and Capacity Building Support Project, in collaboration with Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development. The conference provided a public platform to highlight the US Government’s assistance to Ghana’s fisheries sector, highlighting successes, lessons learned, opportunities and challenges associated with the implementation of the two projects.

Francis Ato Cudjoe, the Deputy Minister for Fisheries and Aquaculture Development, said in his opening remarks, “the Ministry and the Fisheries Commission have taken cognizance of the institutional collaboration required to move the fisheries sector towards sustainability and profitability and I am happy to see all key stakeholders represented here.”

The Conference proceeded with an insightful presentation on the topic; “Global trends in fisheries in the context of the blue economy: Implications for Ghana” delivered by the renowned Marine Economist, Prof. Rashid Sumaila, University of British Columbia, Canada, followed by a plenary panel discussions involving international fisheries experts including; Prof. Martin Tsamenyi, Emeritus Professor, former Director of Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security and Prof. Wisdom Akpalu, Institute for Natural Resources in Africa.

Participants issued a communiqué at the end of the conference highlighting key issues:

- Actions to immediately end overfishing and enhance Ghana’s small pelagic fisheries
- Re-directing input subsidies that exacerbate over-exploitation of fisheries re-sources into subsidies that benefit fishing communities
- Increasing emphasis on improving Ghana’s fisheries post-harvest sector
- Implement actions to eradicate illegal transshipment of fish (‘Saiko’ fishing)

Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development, Naa Afoley Quaye, indicated the readiness of the Ministry and the Fisheries Commission to work with all stakeholders in providing leadership in the transformation of the fisheries sector to achieve national food security, create employment, and eliminate poverty..

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## Establishing a Closed Season Sustains the Livelihood of Women Oyster Pickers

**“The closed season was a great opportunity for us. When we reopened I made GHC80 (\$20) a day. That was not possible before.”**

*Bernice Agorogo*



Bernice Agorogo (right) harvests oysters from the Densu estuary at Tsokomey in the Greater Accra region, where USAID works to protect marine ecosystems.

Photo credit: Abraham Asare, DAA

**“We believe that empowering local communities to manage their own resources is one of the most important components of a food-secure future in Ghana.”**

*Dr. Margaret Atikpo, Fisheries Specialist, SFMP*

Oyster harvesting is a full-time job for women who live along Ghana’s coastal communities. Mangrove oysters are predominantly harvested and provide an important source of income and protein. However, in the last three years Ghana’s oyster stocks have significantly dropped owing to an increasing number of harvesters. As families in coastal villages increase, a growing number of women engage in year-round harvesting, contributing to the reduction of oyster stocks.

In the communities of Tsokomey, Tetegu and Bortianor— where USAID, through Feed the Future’s Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP) works with fishers, fish processors, and traders, oysters stocks are on the decline. Oysters are harder to find and women are seeing the sizes of their collected oysters getting smaller and smaller.

USAID partnered the Development Action Association, and the Ghana Fisheries Commission to help oyster pickers organize themselves into the Densu Estuary Women’s Oyster Pickers Association (DOPA). These women developed an organizational charter, standard operating procedures, formed a steering committee, and received training in the basic science of oyster habitats and reproduction. Thirty core members of DOPA were trained on the importance of water quality, salinity, acidity, and turbidity (how much dirt and sand is suspended in the water). “We learned about oyster habitat, growth and spawning cycles of the oysters,” says Bernice Agorogo from Tsokomey.

Today, DOPA’s membership includes over 150 women who make decisions about the sustainable management of oysters. In November 2017, they made a significant first-time decision to close their oyster grounds to harvesting for five months. This decision was based on scientific data, which allowed time for the oysters to spawn and grow bigger. “The closed season was a critical turning point for us. When we reopened, I harvested larger volumes of oyster and double sales from GHS 40 (\$10) to GHS 80 (\$20) per day. Now the oysters look bigger and more attractive than before. We want the closed season to happen every year,” says Bernice, a mother of three.

Bernice and others in DOPA are now optimistic about the future of oyster harvesting in their communities, as they work to reinforce an annual closed season to increase their harvest and improve their livelihoods. Mirroring the success in the Densu Estuary, USAID and its partners are now taking community-based management to the Ankobra and Pra estuaries. Dr. Margaret Atikpo, one of the SFMP leads on community engagement states, “We believe that empowering local communities to manage their own resources is one of the most important components of a food-secure future in Ghana.” Under the U.S. Government’s Feed the Future Initiative, SFMP works to improve the livelihoods and nutritional status of vulnerable communities.

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## USAID Supports Ghana With a Canoe Identification Card

**“Bearing in mind that we are all in the same boat, I welcome on-board all proposals and suggestions that will ensure profitable and sustainable management of Ghana’s fisheries resources”**

*Hon. Naa Afoley Quaye, Minister for Fisheries and Aquaculture Development*



USAID/Ghana Agricultural Team Leader, Amber Lily Kenny (far right) assisting the Hon Minister for Fisheries and Aquaculture Development, Elizabeth Naa Afoley Quaye (Second left) to unveil the Canoe Identification Card. With them are the Executive Director of the Fisheries Commission, Michael Arthur Dadzie (first left) and the Head of Marine Fisheries Management of the Fisheries Commission, Matilda Quist (second right)

**“I am very optimistic that the CIC will help with the management of the artisanal fisheries sector, contribute to recovery of the fish stock and eventually, help in sustaining the livelihoods of canoe fishermen. Hopefully soon, it would be used to ensure efficient distribution and sale of premix fuel”.**

*Seth Abotsi, Volta Regional Chairman, Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council*

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Ghana has once again demonstrated its commitment to ensuring sustainable fisheries management with the introduction and launch of identification cards for artisanal fishers referred to as “Canoe Identification Card” (CIC) to be issued to all operational canoes. With Support from the USAID Sustainable Fisheries Management Project, the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development and the Fisheries Commission, in cooperation with the Ghana National Canoe Fishermen’s Council officially launched the canoe identification card on December 10, 2019 under the theme, “towards profitable and sustainable management of Ghana’s fisheries resources” at Keta in the Volta Region.

The marine artisanal fisheries sub sector has over the years been confronted with challenges that threaten the sustainability of the sector. One of the major challenges is the open access regime for the artisanal fisheries that put no restrictions on new entrants which has contributed to loss of overall profitability for the artisanal fisheries sector, threatening food security, increasing poverty in coastal fishing communities as well as threatening the livelihoods of fisher folk who depend directly and indirectly on the fisheries sector. The open access regime has resulted in the race to catch the last fish as canoe numbers and fishing effort keep growing. In response to this challenge, the Fisheries Commission with support from USAID developed an identification system for the artisanal sub sector. The introduction of the Canoe Identification Card will make it possible for the Commission in collaboration with fishers, particularly, Canoe Council, to put in place management interventions to transform the marine artisanal fisheries from open access to a controlled and regulated access regime laying the foundations for moving the artisanal fisheries subsector towards sustainability and profitability. Registered and embossed canoes will be issued with Identification Cards bearing unique Quick Response (QR) codes, readable with a mobile device. The features of the cards include; canoe number, name, length, and gear type among others. Implementation of the Canoe Identification Card system is targeted at all operational marine canoes with an initial issuance of 10,000 cards to registered canoes across the four coastal regions; Volta, Greater Accra, Central and Western. The aim is to eventually cap and manage future access and entry into the fishery to ensure the resources are not overexploited.

Speaking at the national launch of the Canoe Identification Cards, the Minister for Fisheries and Aquaculture Development reiterated the Government’s commitment to achieving sustainable fisheries management. The USAID Ghana Agricultural Team Leader, Amber Lily Kenny affirmed the US Government’s support to sustainable fisheries management in Ghana saying “We are pleased to embark on this journey to strengthen Ghana’s fisheries with you and reaffirm our partnership. Today, let’s celebrate our progress. The United States is confident that our efforts will restore Ghana’s precious marine resources now and for future generations”.

# **CO-MANAGEMENT AND CONSTITUENCIES**



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## Ghana Journalists Trained in Fisheries Issues Serve as Model for Africa

**Ghana Journalists Network receives the nod as pacesetter after sharing experiences at African journalists conference**



Presenter, Kwame Malcolm Mensah hosting fisheries stakeholders on Radio 360 'Let's Go to Sea' program in the Western Region – Ghana.

*Photo Credit: Kwame Malcolm Mensah, Radio Presenter – Radio 360*

**A member of the Ghana network is now a representative for West Africa sub-region and is contributing experiences and lessons learned for the formation of the African Journalists Network for Sustainable Fisheries.**

**Fisheries in Ghana is a major contributor** to the economy accounting for about US\$1 billion in revenue each year and contributing to about 11 percent of agriculture gross domestic product. Fisheries also accounts for about 58 percent of protein intake in Ghanaian diets. Nonetheless, the sector appeared to be receiving minimum attention from the media despite the numerous crises it has been facing for about two decades now: Stock depletion and collapse, low fish catch and loss of livelihoods of about 230,000 fishers directly employed in the sector (both marine and inland).

A Feed the Future program - the USAID/Ghana Sustainable Fisheries Management Project – SFMP – whose goal is to rebuild targeted marine fisheries stocks through the adoption of sustainable practices and exploitation levels finally intervened: intensified engagements with media to raise awareness of the challenges in the sector and draw public support and political will to support improved fisheries management.

After two orientation workshops in July and December 2015 for 35 selected journalists along Ghana's coastal zone, the journalists formed a network to share ideas, contacts and leads for stories on fisheries. This contributed to nearly two dozen fisheries reports and talk shows between October and December 2015; a roughly 70 percent increase in the number of reports, well over that in the previous quarter, before the USAID intervention.

In February 2016, USAID/SFMP sponsored 10 of the journalists to participate in an African Journalists for Sustainable Fisheries Workshop in Elmina – Central Region – Ghana, where the group did a presentation, upon request of organizers, about the existing network. The workshop was organized for about 150 journalists across 40 African countries by the World Bank and African Union Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) with significant support from USAID.

Next steps from the workshop included the formation of an African Journalists Network for Sustainable Fisheries, modelled after the Ghana network that has a social network platform for sharing fisheries information. One of the Ghanaian journalists will represent West Africa and share ideas for the effective formation of the Africa-wide network. Some members of the Ghana network have since created segments on their respective radio talk shows, dedicated to discussions on fisheries issues.

USAID/Ghana SFMP intends to intensify engagements with more journalists to support a National Campaign for the implementation of management measures, such as closed seasons, as enshrined in a Ministry of Fisheries National Marine Fisheries Management Plan.

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## Community Restores Degraded Mangroves Fast!

**A year after study tour, residents replant 45% of degraded mangrove forest**



Chief of Sanwoma, left spearheading the mangrove restoration

**“I had good resource at my disposal and didn’t know its worth. I now have a high sense of pride, knowing that this management activity will provide for posterity.”**

*Odikro Nkrumah Chief of Sanwoma*

**Mangrove forests are essential** for the sustenance of marine life. They provide an ideal habitat for juvenile fish, offering both protection and nutrition. Mangrove forests also play a key role in combating the effects of coastal erosion and rising sea levels.

Conservation of mangrove forests are very important for countries like Ghana, where the marine fishery is near collapse, with landings of important fish species at 14 percent of the record high of 140,000 metric tons 20 years ago. Fisheries in Ghana supports the livelihoods of 2.2 million people, about 10 percent of the population.

Sanwoma is a popular rural fishing community in the West Coast of Ghana. The fisher folk are blessed with the sea where the village sits at the mouth of the Ankobra river. Hence, fish processors depend heavily on the Ankobra wetland mangroves for a cheap and readily available fuel wood source for fish processing. This practice has degraded over 24 hectares of the mangrove wetland over the years.

Under a US Government presidential Feed the Future Initiative, the USAID/Ghana Sustainable Fisheries Management Project – SFMP – supported Sanwoma to embark on a study tour to another local community where sustainable mangrove harvesting is practised. Before the study tour, some community members did not even know that mangroves could be replanted after harvesting. Aside from the direct economic benefit from wood harvests, the community was unaware of other benefits of the mangrove forests –especially for a community that was battling with erosion of the shoreline, made worse by the loss of mangroves.

Sanwoma is now all about conservation! Led by the community Chief, and with technical assistance from the project, the community developed an action plan for restoration and is enforcing local laws to prevent excessive mangrove harvesting. The degraded areas were mapped and seedlings raised for replanting. Consequently, a total of 8,200 mangrove seedlings have been replanted in 12 months after the study tour, representing about 45 per cent of the degraded area.

Alas, the local fisher folk of Sanwoma have proved that they can become effective forest stewards!

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## A Boost for Sustainable Fisheries Practices in Ghana

**18 recognized for outstanding, voluntary initiatives at inaugural Best Fisheries Practices Awards ceremony.**



Michael Bumegbe (middle) receiving his Fisheries Leadership Award

“This award will boost our efforts to stop the use of monofilament net in Keta. Our appreciation goes to the American people.”

*Michael Bumegbe Chief fisherman,  
Kedzikope, Keta, Volta Region*

Michael Bumegbe, a fisherman from Keta District, Volta region is optimistic as he looks confidently into the future of his fishing business. “It’s a major improvement for us all” says Michael as he observes how fishermen in his community have moved away from their old methods of fishing to more sustainable practices.

Like most fisher folks, Michael has benefited from series of training on best fisheries practices from Friends of the Nation under the USAID’s Sustainable Fisheries Management Project and has been applying what he was taught to his business.

Today, Michael is one of the 18 recipients of the Best Fisheries Practices Awards from the USAID project that is intended to reward resource users for the adoption of sustainable fishing practices as enshrined in the Fisheries Laws as well as for best post-harvest fisheries practices that allow fishmongers and processors to add value to their businesses.

Michael’s success is born out of his determination to make a positive difference. Concerned about the unsustainable practices of fishing, he was the first to destroy his monofilament fishing net (which is illegal in marine waters) and caused his peers to follow suit. “My children schools fees and all family need depend on fishing” says Michael.

The training provided by SFMP’s partners have not only increase awareness but also empower the beneficiaries to undertake leadership role towards addressing the challenges of unsustainable fishing practices across Ghana’s coastal communities.

The awards scheme was instituted by the SFMP in partnership with the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development and the Fisheries Commission to rebuild targeted marine fisheries stocks through the adoption of sustainable fishing practices and exploitation levels. Over 170 Chief Fishermen from the Ghana National Canoe Fisherman Council and 120 women leaders from the National Fish Processors and Traders Association have participated.

The efforts are in harmony with the Sustainable Fisheries Management Project’s objectives which seeks to rebuild targeted marine fisheries stocks, notably small pelagic fish important to local food security, through the adoption of sustainable practices and exploitation levels.

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## A Reward for Good Fisheries Practices

### 18 fisherfolk were honored at the Best Fisheries Practices Awards event



Nana Jojo Solomon (left), Acting President of the Ghana National Canoe Council presents an award to Michael Bamugbe during the awards event.



Madam Gavor (middle) receiving an award at the event

**“The project’s training not only increases awareness but also empowers fisherfolk to take up leadership roles and address illegal fishing practices.”**

*Michael, a Chief Fisherman in the Volta Region*

Ghana’s fisheries sector has been a significant contributor to the socio-economic development of the country. Recently, the sector accounted for US\$1 billion annual revenue, contributed 4.5% to national GDP and employed 10% of the national workforce. Fish accounts for 60% of animal protein in the Ghanaian diet. Thus, the contributions of the sector to Ghana’s food security cannot be over emphasized. However, a recent fisheries stock assessment reveals that Ghana’s fisheries resources are rapidly depleting and near collapse as a result of poor fisheries practices, particularly, overfishing caused by having too many fishing boats chasing too few fish as well as widespread illegal fishing.

The USAID / Ghana Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP) has been working with the Fisheries Commission and other stakeholders to educate fisherfolk about sustainable fisheries practices. After two years of coast wide education, the SFMP introduced a Best Fisheries Practices Awards Scheme to motivate and reward fisherfolk for their voluntary compliance of fisheries laws, and use of good, sustainable fishing and post-harvest practices that contribute to rebuilding the depleting fish stocks and providing safe and wholesome fish to consumers. At a grand durbar organized on March 7, 2017 in Nungua, a community in the Greater Accra Region, eighteen coastal fishing communities, fisheries associations and individual fisherfolk were rewarded for their exemplary behaviors at implementing good fishing practices such as voluntary compliance with laws and use of sustainable fisheries practices.

“It’s a great improvement for us all,” says Michael Bumegbe, an awardee as he observes how fishermen in his community have embraced sustainable fishing practices. Michael, a Chief Fisherman at Keta, a coastal community in the Volta Region, was the first to destroy his monofilament fishing net to inspire his peers to follow suit. “My children’s school fees and all my family’s needs depend on fishing. The USAID project’s training not only increases awareness but also empowers fisherfolk to take up leadership roles and address illegal fishing practices,” Michael added.

Peace Abla Gavor, also an awardee wished she “had participated in the post-harvest fisheries business development training program earlier.” The 54-year-old fish processor from Elmina, a coastal community in the Central Region was struggling with the fish processing business she inherited from her family line until she joined SFMP’s post-harvest training program. “Thanks to USAID, I now enjoy increased returns from my business.” Peace smiled. The awards scheme will be held annually to celebrate the heroes of change, like Peace Abla Gavor and Michael Bumegbe, in Ghana’s fisheries sector.

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## A Boost for Oyster Fisheries Management in Ghana

**150 community members have benefitted from a leadership training in the co-management of oyster resources.**



Women harvesting oysters at Tsokomey

*Photo credit: SFMP*

**“We now understand the ecology and the reproductive cycle of the oysters, as well as their management,”**

*Bernice Agorgo, Oyster Picker Tsokomey  
Accra*

**Oyster harvesting in the Densu estuary** is a traditional vocation passed from generation to generation in Tsokomey and Bortianor fishing communities in Ghana’s Greater Accra region. However, oyster harvesters, mainly women, have seen harvests dwindle over the years, reducing the benefits of gathering shellfish as a supplemental food and income activity. Through the U.S. government’s Feed the Future Initiative, management innovations are being introduced by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Sustainable Fisheries Management Project. These communities are now making progress in restoring oysters stocks in traditional harvest areas.

With project support since 2016, about 150 fisherfolk have learned about oyster biology and ecology and importance of water-quality and mangrove habitats to the health of the fishery. With a growing understanding of oyster ecology and data collection, the fisherfolk are beginning to plan for the restoration of mangroves and other measures that provide enhanced habitat for the oysters to grow. The initiative is a collaborative effort by SFMP and Ghana’s Fisheries and Forestry Commissions to encourage local fisherfolk to become good stewards of this resource.

Development Action Association, a local implementing partner for the project, is working directly with members of the communities to provide leadership training workshops for oyster harvesters. According to local residents, the support has strengthened their efforts to develop a co-management approach to preservation of this fishery.

“USAID is helping us restore the habitat for our oysters,” said Emilia Nortey, a 63-year old development worker in the area. “We now understand the ecology and the reproductive cycle of the oysters, as well as their management,” added Bernice Agorgro, one of the 150 people who received training.

The co-management approach is forging an effective partnership between the government, key stakeholders, and fisherfolk to share responsibility for management of the fishery. Thus, the oyster pickers are empowered to make their own choices to improve their livelihoods.

The Executive Director of Development Action Association, Mrs. Lydia Sasu, is optimistic about the future of the initiative, “I am confident, especially because of the resolve of the oyster pickers. USAID’s support is helping Ghana restore its depleted oyster stocks,” important to local food security.

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## Savings Micro-Link Insurance Addresses Fishers Needs in Ghana

Joshua Tewu, a 42 year old fisherman in James Town in the Greater Accra region, is optimistic about the future of his work following the introduction of a savings-linked micro-insurance product for fishers

**“Through the scheme, I am now able to save GHC 5 (equivalent to one US dollar) each day to plan for my retirement which in the past was not easy for me to do,”**



Joshua Tewu, a fisherman at James Town in the Greater Accra region standing by his canoe, July 2, 2018.

**“This scheme is creating opportunities for fishers and fisheries sector personnel in Ghana thereby enabling economic growth and national development”.**

*Terry Nii Amartei,  
Micro Insurance Coordinator, UT Life*

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and fish processors in his community. He was drawn to fishing over two decades ago because of the sector’s potential for growth. At that time, Ghana’s fishing sector was growing and it seemed everyone wanted to build a boat and become a fisherman. Today, the fishing sector provides livelihoods for over 2.9 million people.

Joshua’s work is labor intensive and everyone in the sector is well aware of the risks involved. Still, many small-scale fishermen don’t take the daily safety measures to reduce these risks. And fewer still have any kind of insurance or financial plan to deal with the kinds of unforeseen accidents or family needs that emerge in life. Saving for retirement and dealing with the potential financial risks associated with death or permanent disability are issues that Joshua and his friends are aware of but the majority of fisherfolk simply hoped that nothing unexpected happen. When it did, they often were left in dire circumstances. To address the challenges faced by Joshua and other fishers and fish processors, the United States Agency for International Development reached out to private sector partners through the Ghana Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP). Funded through the US Government’s global Feed the Future program, the SFMP project worked with Millennium Insurance, UT Life Insurance, Vodafone Telecommunications Company, and BIMA a leading Insurance player in Ghana, to explore options with a focus on reducing risk and increasing financial security of fishers and fish processors in Ghana.

After two years of planning with fisherfolk to understand their needs, the Fishers’ Future Plan was launched in September 2017. It provides a platform through which people along the coast can use their mobile phones to enroll and make payments for insurance that provides coverage for death or accidental disability, as well as the ability to make deposits in a linked voluntary savings account. Fisherfolk are encouraged to save 1 to 3 Ghana Cedis a day (about \$.62 cents). Once they are in the program for 11 months, they can begin withdrawing of funds at a rate of 30 percent per month, including any interest earned on their savings.

Both the insurance and savings programs link with Vodafone Cash, a mobile-money, mobile-phone based ‘wallet’, to facilitate easy payment. As one of the numerous subscribers, Joshua has seen the benefits, he says. He now encourages friends to join the plan. More than 3500 fisherfolk from the communities of Moree, Elmina, and James Town where the program was launched are now subscribed to the micro-insurance program. Terry Nii Amartei, a micro-insurance coordinator with UT Life, believes that this approach has created increased saving culture and helping to improve the wellbeing of fisherfolk. “This scheme is helping create opportunities for fishers in Ghana to save money and protect them from financial disaster when accidents happen.”



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## New Fishers Future Plan Micro-Insurance Gives Fishers a Confident Future

The Fishers Future Plan provides life insurance and a voluntary savings option to fishers in Elmina, Axim, James Town, Agbobloshie, Makola, Cape Coast, Sekondi, Takoradi, Keta, Moree and Shama with over 4000 subscribers and savings deposits exceeding GHC 230,000.



Augustina Acquah, Fish Processor in Brofoyedur in the Cape Coast Central Region

“With the payment of my late uncle’s claims, I am now very confident that the micro-insurance works for regular people like us.”

*Augustina Acquah*

The Ghanaian fishing industry is facing the collapse of mackerel, anchovy and sardine fish stocks due to overfishing. Declines in catches of these main Ghanaian food fish have placed fishers and processors in a precarious situation. Poverty is increasing, and recurring demands such as school fees, health needs, and hospital bills from accidents is threatening the wellbeing of fisherfolk. Perhaps the most critical situation is the loss of income due to accidental death, or partial or permanent disability of a family member. In addition to accidents, other events such as extended closed seasons when fishing is not allowed so stocks can rejuvenate, reduce income for short periods. When these shocks happen, the financial resilience of families of small-scale fishers and predominantly women fish processors are reduced and the welfare of their children is put at risk.

To help address this problem, USAID Ghana’s Sustainable Fisheries Management Project reached out to private sector partners to search for a solution. Answering the call was MiLife Insurance, Millennium Insurance and Vodafone Ghana. The need was clear. Fishermen and fish processors needed a safety net that protected them against unexpected shocks such as accidents or loss of life that put their livelihoods and wellbeing at risk, but also encouraged them to save for the future to withstand anticipated and unanticipated needs. SFMP and its private sector partners worked diligently and in May 2017 introduced the Fishers Future Plan. The plan combined mobile phone-based payments for life and accident insurance with a voluntary savings plan. After its piloting, which led to reformulations in the product itself to better meet the needs of fisherfolk, the micro-insurance scheme is picking up speed. Operational in ten coastal communities with savings deposits exceeding GHS230,000 (US\$47,519).

At Brofoyedur in Cape Coast, Augustina Acquah was shocked when she received news that her beloved uncle had died. Her immediate worry was how to provide a befitting funeral for him. As a low income earning fisher processor, she had only enough to cover her family’s basic needs and the sudden expenses for the funeral placed a heavy burden on her family. Unknown to them, her uncle had subscribed to the Fisheries Future Plan two months before his death. “When distributors of the plan heard of his passing they immediately came to the family house to assist us with the claims process. After submitting all the required documents, we received a payment of GHC 1000 (US\$200) two weeks before the funeral date”, Augustina recounted. “It really saved us.” Now a subscriber herself, Augustina contributes GHC 5 (US\$1) of her daily processed fish sales to the program. “I now subscribe. I registered my two grandchildren too because I want my peace of mind.” Augustina now urges other fisherfolk to register. Although facilitated in the beginning by USAID’s SFMP, the program now is completely owned and sustained by its private sector partners, and is expanding to other regions because, as Augustina says, “One never knows when unforeseen circumstances will come. Although we pray they do not happen, you just never know”.

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## Fishers Develop Consensus for Fish Stock Recovery in Ghana

*The artisanal fishery* is an important source of livelihoods for more than 130,000 fishers and some 30,000 fish processors across the country and contribute about 80% to the overall marine fish catch, mostly the people's fish such as a sardinellas, mackerel and anchovy. These fish species represent an affordable and accessible food protein source for poor households and play

**“The Fisher to Fisher Dialogues has come stay, under this program, we have unanimously agreed to key management measures to manage our fishery resource and this is good for the sector and our nation as we remain focused.”**



Nana Jojo Solomon, National Secretary of the Ghana National Canoe Fishers Council and one of the key leaders of the Fisher-to-Fisher Dialogue program.

**“Through the F2F Dialogues, the Fisheries Commission and fishers are working together for the first time to address critical issues together.”**

*Seth Abotsi, Volta Regional Chairman,  
GNCFC*

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crucial role in maintaining good nutrition and health. Despite these contributions, scientific evidence supported by local knowledge from fishers pointed out that the sector is on the verge of collapse as a result of excess fishing capacity and widespread use of unsustainable fishing practices including use of light and fine mesh nets.

According to Nana Jojo Solomon, the secretary to the Ghana National Canoe Fishermen's Council (GNCFC), “the collapse of the artisanal fishery threatens economic growth in the sector and presents an internal security problem that potentially directly affects the livelihoods of as many as 150,000 people involved in the marine fishery sector, from fishermen to processors to traders. Ghana's fisheries are in need of support to address the decline in fish stocks and achieve sustainability.”

To build understand and support for actions responding to this challenge, the USAID Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP) worked with the Fisheries Commission to introduce the 'Fisher-to-Fisher Dialogue' (F2F), a mechanism that brings together fishermen and presents a platform for direct communications between the Fisheries Commission and their constituencies that builds political will and public support to make hard choices toward the recovery of the nation's declining small pelagic fish stocks. Small pelagics, primarily mackerel, sardines and anchovies are often referred to as 'the people's fish' because they make up the vast majority of the protein intake for most Ghanaians. Over the last two years, the GNCFC has worked with Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development, the Fisheries Commission, and the National Fish Processors and Traders Association to lead the F2F Dialogues across the country.

The Fisher-to-Fisher Dialogue platform has so far engaged stakeholders on key topics including progress on implementation of the National Fisheries Management Plan (NFMP) and the role of fishermen and fish processors in its implementation. According to Socrates Apetorgbor, SFMP fisheries program management, “Even the existence of the NFMP was largely unknown in some fishing communities and now fisherfolk are talking about what actions they want to take to achieve NFMP objectives! With government officials and fisherfolk directly discussing how fisherfolk themselves can become involved in the implementation of the National Fisheries Management Plan, there are already results. For example, fishers in all coastal regions are now pushing for declaration of an additional weekly non-fishing day and controlling new entrants into the artisanal sector to reduce overcapacity.” Nana Jojo Solomon says “We are confident that ‘the people's fish’ are on the path to recovery with the support of USAID SFMP for the F2F Dialogue program. This is a gift from the American people to the fishers of Ghana.”





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## Political Parties Dialogue with Stakeholders on the Future of Ghana's Fisheries

The fisheries resources of Ghana provide employment and livelihoods to more than 3 million people. Over the last two decades, there has been a steady decline in output of the artisanal sub sector, especially in the landings of the small pelagic fish species often referred to as the “people’s fish” which make up the largest share of local fish catch. This decline is affecting fisheries livelihoods and increasing poverty.

**“The need for greater stakeholder involvement in decision making to increase compliance with fisheries regulations is critical. As a university, we believe that through strong partnerships and committed leadership we can solve Ghana’s fisheries problems.”**

*Vice Chancellor, University of Cape Coast*



**“As a fish processor I am glad I was able to engage with the political parties in person. I hope this activity is continued as it provides a good platform for fisherfolk to make their concerns known”.**

*Be Be Wradi, Fish Processor*

The 2020 national elections offer a unique opportunity to highlight the critical challenges the sector faces and to educate the public on fisheries issues. Given the seriousness of the current situation facing the fisheries sector, high-level political commitments are needed to reform the sector that contributes significantly to national food security and economic development.

The USAID Sustainable Fisheries Management Project supported the University of Cape Coast’s Centre for Coastal Management to organize a town hall event for political parties and fisheries stakeholders. The theme was “Towards 2020 National Elections: Town Hall Engagement with Political Parties on Fisheries and Coastal Management Challenges in Ghana”.

The Convention People’s Party, National Democratic Congress, New Patriotic Party, and the People’s National Convention participated in the 2-hour event held in Accra on September 22, 2020. The event was aired live on national television and radio to millions of Ghanaians (Joy News, Joy FM and ATL FM). The event was also streamed online on the Facebook pages of Joy News and ATL FM reaching more than 20,000 viewers.

The audience included representatives of the Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council, National Fish Processors and Traders Association, National Canoe Owners Association, National Inland Canoe Fishermen Council, Premix Secretariat, Coastal Development Authority, among others. Representatives from academic institutions and government agencies also participated virtually.

The representatives of each political party had five minutes to present their positions on the challenges confronting the sector and how they intend to address them if elected. The party representatives then responded to prompt questions from the moderator on issues ranging from; illegal transshipment of bycatch “saiko”, overcapacity within the fisheries sector, vessel licensing, fishing subsidies, aquaculture development, closed seasons, and eco-tourism. The party representatives also had the opportunity to respond to pertinent issues raised by their counterparts.

The audience was also given thirty minutes to question the political party representatives on their issues of concern. Be Wradi, a fish processor and member of the National Fish Processors and Traders Association said, “As a fish processor I am glad I was able to engage with the political parties in person. I hope this activity is continued as it provides a good platform for fisherfolk to make their concerns known.”

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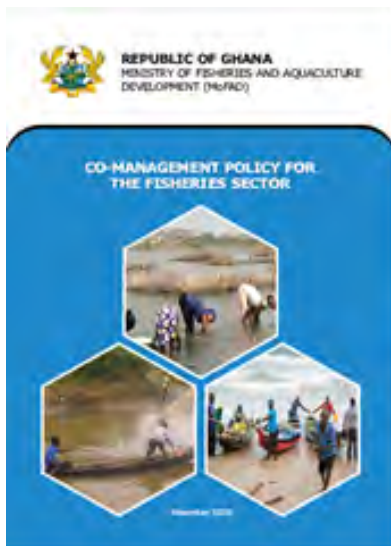
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## USAID Supports Ghana With A Co-Management Policy For The Fisheries Sector

**“The Ministry has embraced this new approach to fisheries management, demonstrated by the involvement of resource users in the development of the policy.”**

*Mrs. Levina Owusu, Chief Director, Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development*



Cover page of the National Fisheries Co-management Plan.

**“A co-management regime gives us a sense of ownership, and legitimizes our role as resource users and managers. It also places a sense of duty on us to play our role in the fight against illegal fishing to ensure sustainability of the resource on which our livelihoods depend.”**

*Nana Solomon, Acting President, Ghana National Canoe Fishermen’s Council*

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The fisheries sector in Ghana encompasses marine and inland fisheries and aquaculture, as well as related activities along the fisheries value chain. Marine fisheries account for over 80% of fish consumed in Ghana. The sector provides livelihoods for an estimated 10% of the population. About 60% of animal dietary protein for the average Ghanaian comes from fish. Previously, the management style of the sector has been a top-down approach with resource users only peripherally engaged in decision making on how the fishery should be managed. However, there is a growing awareness among fisheries administrators worldwide that sustainable and efficient fisheries management regimes require the support and involvement of resource users in decision making. This best practice, called co-management, facilitates sustainable management practices and is a partnership between government, resource users, and other stakeholders who share responsibility and authority for the management of a resource.

Fisheries co-management provides the framework for a bottom-up approach to management decision making with active participation and involvement of fisherfolks. Co-management is perceived by many experts to be a better approach to addressing fisheries resource management challenges. The USAID Sustainable Fisheries Management Project supported the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development and its Fisheries Commission to develop a national co-management policy for the fisheries sector. The policy provides a roadmap to transition Ghana’s fisheries management from a top-down to a bottom-up approach. The new co-management policy builds on the lessons learned within the sector over the years and developed after extensive consultations with resource users.

The Chief Director of the Ministry, Mrs. Levina Owusu, speaking on the trajectory from the past conventional management regime to a new co-management regime said, “The Ministry has embraced this new approach to fisheries management, demonstrated by the involvement of resource users in the development of the policy.” In addition to the national co-management policy, the project also supported the Fisheries Commission to develop three community-based fisheries management plans for the Ankobra, Pra and Densu estuaries. The plans were developed through action learning processes with active involvement of all stakeholders and facilitated by local NGOs; Hen Mpoano, Friends of the Nation, and Development Action Association. These plans, approved by the Fisheries Commission, provide for the first time in Ghana, exclusive use rights to local fisheries associations to harvest certain species of fish in these estuaries and assigns responsibility for their sustainable management to these groups.

Highlighting what the transition to co-management means for artisanal fisherfolk, the Acting President of the Ghana National Canoes Fishermen’s Council, Nana Jojo Solomon said, “Artisanal fisherfolk are very much pleased that there is now a co-management policy for the fisheries sector. The policy defines the role of artisanal fishers, regulators, and other stakeholders. A co-management regime gives us a sense of ownership, and legitimizes our role as resource users and managers. It also places a sense of duty on us to play our role in the fight against illegal fishing to ensure sustainability of the resource on which our livelihoods depend.”



# **SCIENCE FOR MANAGEMENT**



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## Fishers Become Researchers in Fight to Restore Stocks

**In the quest to rebuild Ghana's fish stocks, some fishers are now helping conduct fish stock assessments**



46-year old Fisherman - Raymond Annan, recording information of fish at sea

**“This collaborative research is very insightful; I now know the alarming status of our stocks; I am ready to learn more and help educate peers on the state of our fishery”.**

*Raymond Annan  
Fishermen, Sekondi - WIR, Ghana*

**In Ghana, fisheries plays a major role** in the country's socio-economic development. Fish has long been the preferred and cheapest source of animal protein with about 75% of total annual production consumed locally. Ghanaians eat an average of 20-25kg of fish per person per annum — higher than the world average of 13kg. As much as 65% of animal protein in the Ghanaian diet is thought to be from fish.

Yet in the last 10 years, stocks of four key fish stocks in Ghana's waters have declined by 23%. To help revive the fishery, researchers and scientists must first understand more about the stocks. To conduct at-sea assessments, however, would require them to hire boats and crew — resources fishermen already have.

Through a USAID Feed the Future Initiative, Ghana intends to rebuild a collapsing fishery to reduce poverty and hunger. The Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP), in partnership with a sister project of the University of Cape Coast and a Science and Technical Working Group, has trained local fishermen to help understand the fisheries — a critical first step in reversing the decline. This collaborative team approach of technical and non-technical members helps fishers — often excluded from such processes — to experience firsthand science-based decision-making and become part owners in the process.

To date, SFMP has trained 12 fishers, who record information during fishing expeditions without losing significant time from their fishing effort. As they haul their catch, fishers note the quantity of fish caught, size and sex, and for females, their egg maturity. All that's needed is a filet knife, paper, pencil, and photos. Raymond Annan is a fisherman from Sekondi and also a member of the collaborative fish research team. Now, as he hauls his catch, he records with hash marks on paper the number of fish he catches in each of the four key species. He cuts them open and records their sex, size, and maturity of the eggs if females. Raymond also takes photos. This team approach and simple methodology is proving invaluable and plans are already underway to train another 20 fishermen toward the SFMP goal of 100 trained fishermen and women processors on the team by 2017. The collected data not only serves the SFMP science/technical team, but informs those implementing Ghana's National Fisheries Management Plan; a plan signaling Ghana is serious about its fisheries crisis and committed to restore its health.

For the first time ever, fishermen are doing more than fish; they're helping with research and decision-making on the future of Ghana fisheries.

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## UAVs Delivering New Information for Vulnerable Communities

**High-wave events** are common at Anlo Beach. Recently dozens of homes were washed away, displacing more than 200 residents. “When a similar thing happened to us about 25 years ago, we called for resettlement. But that never materialized”, says John Kennedy, a community elder at Anlo Beach in the Shama District of the Western Region. Located at the mouth of the Pra River, the shoreline along this section of Ghana’s coast is dynamic. According to media reports, more than 500 homes have been de-

stroyed by the sea in the past 30 years. Erosion is a fact of life, stoking fears that entire communities could soon disappear.

“Most communities in the region are facing this situation,” says Richard John Jones, the Western Regional Deputy Director responsible for spatial planning. “The rate at which these places are becoming more vulnerable is alarming.” Dramatic changes to the shoreline are being driven by waves, tides, winds, storms, sea-level change, geomorphic processes, and human activities. Coastal flooding and shoreline erosion is frequently and constantly affecting people, property, and ecosystems. However, in order for planners and community leaders to create sustainable solutions, more and current information is needed.

The introduction and systematic operation of two Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) will meet the need for land-use and land-cover information for 17 districts in the Central Region and 22 districts in the Western Region. This intervention will also address implementation of fisheries management and livelihood activities in fishing communities. “This is a major breakthrough for the country,” says Jones. Over the last two years, the USAID Sustainable Fisheries Management Project, working closely with the University of Rhode Island’s Environmental Data Center, has been equipping and training Ghanaian researchers at the University of Cape Coast to apply UAV technologies to data collection and community planning. UAVs directly support:

- monitoring and evaluation of coastal ecosystems
- quantification of coastal vulnerabilities
- mapping of fisheries infrastructure
- capturing images that help enhance community resilience and protect coastal livelihoods.

The SFMP UAV program is improving how coastal zones and landscapes are conserved, managed, and utilized. The program provides two UAVs, multiple camera options, and staff training for government, non-government, and university entities. Operators are trained in the safe use of UAVs; as well as processing and analyzing the information collected. “We are trying to secure a balance where people continue to sustain their livelihoods in a happy and safe environment,” says Christopher Damon, who works on geographic information systems and spatial planning with the Project. High-resolution, UAV imagery is supporting regional development objectives by providing a cost-effective means to inform planners and researchers as they develop sound mitigation measures for the risks that vulnerable coastal communities face.

**SFMP trains local researchers to use unmanned aerial vehicles for identifying and mapping coastal communities in the path of floods and erosion.**



An aerial view of Anlo Beach with analysis that shows the impact of erosion.

**“The rate at which these communities are becoming more vulnerable is alarming”**

*Richard John Jones,  
Western Regional Deputy Director,  
Land Use Authority*



## USAID Builds Research Capacity for Sustainable Fisheries in Ghana

For many fishermen in Ghana, fishing does not require formal education. Kojo Eyim, a 45-year old fisherman with a family of four from Elmina in the Central Region says, “even without formal education, our forefathers were known to be well versed in fishing and navigation and were very successful.” However, with the near collapse of the mackerel, sardine and anchovy stocks, the main source of animal protein for a majority of Ghanaians, Kojo and his colleagues have come to realize that although traditional knowledge had served the fishing communities well

in the past, the complexities of modern fisheries management require new approaches with integration of scientific knowledge and management expertise.

The USAID Sustainable Fisheries Management Project implemented by the University of Rhode Island, in collaboration with University of Cape Coast, the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development, and the Fisheries Commission, identified a number of scientific capacity gaps that required attention. The project supported five professionals for advanced graduate degree training in the United States under the US government’s Feed the Future Initiative.

Evelyn Takyi a 29-year old Ghanaian who graduated with a Master’s in Fisheries Biology from the University of Rhode Island in June, 2019, is one of the five beneficiaries of the projects long-term degree training initiative.

Beneficiaries of this collaborative graduate degree training effort include two staff from the Fisheries Commission and three students from the University of Cape Coast. Ten Ph.D. students supported by another USAID project with the University of Cape Coast also spent a semester abroad at the University of Rhode Island. The training of the beneficiary students included leadership orientation and weekly interdisciplinary seminars. The students were trained in fisheries research, spending time with experienced researchers and scientists of the University of Rhode Island. The students also had the opportunity to discuss fisheries issues with a high-level delegation from Ghana, including the Deputy Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development, the Chief Director of the Ministry while on a study tour to the U.S.

The students pursued research on relevant topics that have direct applicability towards improving Ghana’s fisheries. The topics include: Determination of Population Genetic Structure of *Sardinella* in West Africa, Assessment of the Fishery and Nutrient Value of Atlantic Chub Mackerel in Ghana, Effort Control in the Artisanal Canoe Fishery of Ghana, and Poor Coastal Sanitation, a Case Study of a Coastal Community in Elmina. The findings of their research activities provide critical science-based information for policy makers to make more informed decisions for sustainable fisheries and coastal governance in Ghana.

Looking to the future, academic leaders from the University of Cape Coast and the University of Rhode Island jointly signed an agreement in May, 2019, to start an innovative dual-degree program. This program will enable Ph.D. students at the University of Cape Coast, with the support of a lead advisor from both institutions and a short residency period at the University of Rhode Island, to receive dual degrees from both institutions at the completion of their studies.

**“I am very optimistic about Ghana’s fisheries as I can see the future looking so promising with new ideas.”**



Evelyn Takyi. Beneficiary Graduate from the University of Cape Coast

**“The training is a great opportunity for the country and the fisheries sector.”**

*Vida Osei, Beneficiary Graduate from the Fisheries Commission*

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# **INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING**





## A New Post-Harvest Fish Processing Training Center in Ghana

**“We never believed our dream could come through”** says Lydia Sasu, the Executive Director of Development Action Association a local non-governmental organization in Accra, Ghana. Over the last eighteen years, the Development Action Association,

**“This is a great achievement for us and we are so much grateful for it.”**



Lydia Sasu, the Executive Director, Development Action Association, Accra



Beneficiaries undergoing training at the newly training center, Accra. June 22, 2018

or DAA, has been operating out of a small one-room office with limited ability to train large numbers of women fish processors across Ghana’s fishing communities. This new training center now provides a facility that now can do just that. The majority of women fish processors in Ghana’s artisanal fisheries sector lack the capacity and skills to improve their businesses. This makes it difficult for most of them improve their livelihoods and hampers economic growth.

To help DAA overcome this challenge, USAID’s Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP), part of its global Feed the Future program, worked to first improve the capacity of DAA staff and then provided funding for the construction of a multi-complex fish processing demonstration and training center at Kokrobitey in the Ga South municipality of the Greater Accra region. The new facility has the capacity to train as many as 300 women fish processors each year, as well as enabling DAA to play a larger role in supporting national and regional government policies aimed at improving hygienic fish processing, reduce post-harvest losses and support the adoption of new fish smoking technology developed by the Fisheries Commission and Ghana Standards Authority with SFMP support.

Lydia said that “with this new Fisheries Training Center, DAA will be able to train and benefit so many more women fish processors from all regions of Ghana to achieve the Class I hygienic fish processing certification, the new certification scheme developed by Ghana’s Fisheries Commission and SFMP to encourage fish processors to adopt best practices. We will also provide training in health and safety programs such as fire management, and ways to improve business and accounting practices specifically among small-scale fish processors”. Financed with USAID support and designed to meet Class I standards by the Post-Harvest Unit of the Ghana the Fisheries Commission, the training center will also provide training for men and women on leadership and community-based management for small scale fisheries. In cooperation with the Fisheries Commission and Ghana Standards Authority,

DAA is already delivering training on improving smoked fish quality relative to food safety, food security and value addition through hygienic handling and packaging. Lydia knows that the training will improve the health of fish processors and consumers, as well as address specific environmental concerns related to current fish handling and processing. The demonstration and processing facility located on the grounds of the training center will allow for hands on practical training. “The future of Ghana’s quality fish processing begins right here!” said Lydia, with a smile on her face.

# **POST-HARVEST IMPROVEMENTS**



## BEFORE AND AFTER From Ground to Tabletop

Fishers abandon the ground to instead cut fish on clean table tops  
**BEFORE**



**AFTER:** Susana Bisiw standing between two fish butchers on the beach



**“Our community stands out from others because we are now practicing safe fish handling. Our fish is no longer dirty because we cut them on tables.”**

*Susana Bisiw  
Fishmonger, Shama Bent Western Region-Ghana*

In Ghana there is a long-held belief that “Salt from the sea water kills the bacteria and germs likely to contaminate the fish from cutting on the ground.” The Shama Bentsir community now knows differently.

At the break of dawn, the women fish processors of Shama Bentsir rush to reach the beach with their head pans—ready to buy “any and all” fish that are landed. Unfortunately, while the demand for fish is increasingly high, fewer and fewer fish are being landed. And while fish is critical to local food security, in 2014, landings were only 15 percent of the maximum landings (about 280,000 metric tons) for 1996.

This makes it even more critical that the fish that are landed are handled carefully and kept healthy for consumption. It has always been traditional practice for fishermen to offload fish directly onto the beach and for fish processors to then cut and process them there on the ground as well. However, this ground is a mixture of sand and fecal matter—the result of the longstanding habit, especially in fishing villages, of defecation on the beaches.

In response, the USAID Feed the Future Initiative is bringing knowledge about a healthier way of food handling to the people of fishing communities such as Shamir Bentsir. Not only is it helping rebuild a collapsing fishery, it is helping protect consumer rights and people’s health. This includes the USAID Sustainable Fisheries Management Project, which is providing training and raising awareness on hygienic fish handling. One example is what is happening in Shama Bentsir.

After an eight-week training on business management skills for 2014 selected micro-, small- and medium-scale enterprises in the Western and Central Regions, about 98 percent of the beneficiaries in one community, Shama Bentsir, now cuts their fish on wooden tables instead of on the fecal-polluted beach sand. Some of the women fish processors proudly took project staff to the landing site after a training session to demonstrate behavior change in action.

So far, the project team has trained 751 enterprises and is scaling up the Healthy Fish Campaign using “best fish-handling practices” competitions among communities. The goal is to train more than 1,100 enterprises in Year 2 and have many, many more communities handling their fish as Shama Bentsir now handles its fish.





## Improving Livelihood of the Fish Smoker

**Fish processors are now adding value to their business and maximizing profits.**



Demonstration on the use of improved stove in a fishing community.

**“The smoked fish from the improved stove looks very attractive. I sold my basket of fish from the improved stove for GHC 120.00 instead of GHC 100.00 and it still sold out fast.”**

*Florence Nartey, Smoked Fish processor, Winneba.*

**For many centuries**, women along the coastline of Ghana have relied on the smoking of fish as a major source of livelihood. However these women face some challenges in their business. These include the use of traditional stoves that produce excessive smoke, high fuelwood consumption and direct exposure to heat and open fire by processors. A total of 120,000 inefficient fish smoking stoves have been counted along the coastline and Volta Basin of Ghana as being used by fish processors.

A baseline survey carried out under the USAID-funded Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP) in 2014 indicated that, the use of traditional methods by the fishmongers to process, preserve and store fish for the Ghanaian market is one of the reasons accounting for high post-harvest losses and low profit margins among traders. Exposure to smoke, triggers asthma, causes cancer; in some cases the smoke reduces the confidence level of women in engaging with their spouses and partners because of the smell it leaves in their attires.

USAID/Ghana SFMP seeks among others, to achieve post-harvest improvement and community livelihood development chain along the coastal communities of the central and western regions. Thus, one intervention was the introduction of improved fish smoking stoves in the project targeted areas.

Zuuyelatu Yakubu, is a 38 year old fish processor who has 7 dependents. She is one of the early adopters of the improved stove in Apam, a community in the Gomoa East district. She is very satisfied with the results she is having with use of the improved stove. “With the new stove, I now use half of the quantity of fuelwood I used to consume and I spend less time smoking fish on the improved stove” she said.

“The processed fish from the improved smoking stove looks very attractive. I sold my basket of fish from the improved stove for GHC 120.00 instead of GHC 100.00 and it still sold out fast” Florence Nartey, a fish processor in Winneba, in the central region stated in a customer satisfaction survey that was carried out under the USAID project.

As a result of the improved stove promotional work and customer satisfaction survey carried out, it has become evident that the need for improved stoves is imperative.



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## Women Champion Healthy Fish Campaign

### Women fish processors ban sale of unwholesome fish in their communities



Akua Mansa, Assistant Market Queen, Moree, Central Region, smoking fish

**“I have been smoking fish for over 20 years and never saw any significant improvement. I have been trained; now I will not sell fish to consumers that I cannot eat”.**

*Akua Mansa, Assistant Market Queen*

**Fish processors in parts of Ghana’s Central Region**, particularly Moree, near Cape Coast, have begun rejecting bad fish supplied by fishers to the community after undergoing skills training in March 2016. Thanks to the Feed the Future initiative – the Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP), women are gradually becoming agents of change and advocating the cause of consumer rights protection relative to fisheries food security; perhaps the solution to Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and a first step to ensuring value addition of fish commodities.

Fish constitutes about 60 per cent of protein intake in the average Ghanaian diet. Ghana’s per capita apparent fish consumption stands at 28kg per person per annum, well above the global rate of 16kg; hence the need to pay attention to consumer rights protection and the value addition.

Suppliers of frozen fish are taking advantage of the decline in fish stocks and selling fish which have already gone bad at cheap prices in order to maximize profits. The unwholesome frozen fish, mostly juvenile fish, are referred to as ‘krodooso’ in many fishing communities in the Central Region. Unfortunately, buyers of this kind of fish rather typically incur losses due to poor quality. Thus, the women fish processors are continually sensitizing their peers to reject krodooso in the community.

As part of project implementation, the USAID/Ghana SFMP trained a total of 168 fisher folk comprising 120 women and 48 men in Moree on hygienic fish handling and processing technologies, as well as entrepreneurial skills and business management. The majority of the beneficiaries have testified that participating in the training has helped them add value to fish processing and is yielding economic returns.

The project is promoting improved processing methods and smoking technologies, and awareness creation to women and men on the linkages between good fishing practices and a sustainable fish supply for their businesses.

Consequently, fish processors like Mansa in Moree are highly motivated and have resolved to advocate for sustainable fishing practices. They intend to continue rejecting juvenile fish and fish caught with chemicals. This they believe will compel fishermen to adopt sustainable fishing methods.

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## Fish Processors Finally Access Loans for Improved Smokers

**38 women have benefited so far from the M Hope micro-finance package to improve their livelihoods**



Microfin Rural Bank officials disbursing loans to fish processors

**“I have finished paying back my loan and have requested for more to expand my business”.**

*Aba Prabah, Fish Processor Senya Ber-eku, Central Region*

**Improved stove technology** is one of the major asset in the smoked fish processing business. Nonetheless, financial access to the improved stoves industry is still a hard nut yet to be fully cracked. Many financial and micro-finance institutions (MFIs) usually refrain from financing renewable energy technologies. This is because, there is limited awareness on the financial viability of investing in renewable energy products. There is also lack of innovative financing solutions for improved stove technologies. Most importantly the fish processing market is seasonal and therefore unstable and unattractive to financial institutions.

Irrespective of these odds, the USAID/Ghana Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP) finally broke the trend! Microfin Rural Bank, a financial Institution in Winneba, Central Region, after engagements with SFMP, expressed willingness to provide loans to local fish processors. What influenced this decision? Microfin identifies with USAID/SFMP development objectives of reducing poverty and hunger, through improved livelihoods; and in this case enhancing the fish processor’s business through financing of improved smoker technologies.

“Part of our mission statement is to help eradicate poverty; we would like to explore this opportunity and assist fish processors to purchase stoves and provide extra for their business,” said Mr. Ishmael Otchere, Executive Director of Microfin.

Consequently, Microfin introduced the ‘M Hope’ financial package targeted at fish processors. The package includes a 5-week effective business and savings management training to beneficiaries before providing them with loans. While many financial institutions request for funds for on-lending, Microfin became the first Financial Institution to willingly provide loans to fish processors from their own resources. Beneficiaries do not only receive loans but effective business management training with coaching.

So far 38 women have fully completed the training and benefited from M Hope loans of GHC 75,500 to access improved stove technology. In addition, SFMP subsidized the cost of the stove by 50%, on behalf of the fish processors to ensure easy access to acquiring the stoves. The M Hope initiative has a high potential of bringing on board a number of MFIs to broaden the financial scope for improved cookstoves, whilst saving Ghana’s forests, improving the livelihood of smoked fish processors and minimizing their health risk to smoke exposure.

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## Community with Access to Little Else, Now Food Secure

**Ajomoro Eshiem is a coastal farming community** in Ghana's Western Region an hour and a half upriver from Ankobra by "speed boat," a canoe with an outboard motor. While there is a road that can get you there, it is overgrown and periodically flooded by the Ankobra River during the raining season. Few people in the community have vehicles that can navigate the road, and so boat is the preferred mode of transportation. In a community that

**The Village Savings and Loans Association has now increased the farmers' access to loans and purchasing power**



Members of Ajomoro Eshiem VSLA in a pose after a bi-weekly meeting

**"Before, when seasonal storms would destroy our crops we had no options. Now, with these loans we can continue our businesses and provide for our families. They are keeping us out of poverty and debt."**

*Daniel Tenasi Nkrumah Chairman, VSLA Scheme*

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seems cut off from all else, however, there is a viable option for credit that is helping members of the community to not only endure in times of trouble, but to grow their businesses with financing, in order to continue to provide food for households and neighbouring villages. USAID, through the Sustainable Fisheries Management Project, is helping communities, vulnerable to extreme poverty navigate difficult times by creating inroads to credit through village savings and loan associations (VSLA). The Feed the Future initiative builds opportunities for communities by empowering vulnerable communities through the formation of VSLAs to cultivate a saving culture among members and to increase their resilience in general.

The two communities were selected based on a vulnerability assessment that was conducted in five communities along the Ankobra River. The association is comprised of self-selected members from the communities who have agreed to put their resources in a pool to support each other's' livelihoods and expand their businesses. The two VSLAs have received periodic trainings in development of policies and rules for social fund, share purchase/savings meetings and loan disbursement and repayment methods.

Before project implementing partner – Hen Mpoano– introduced the VSLA to the people of Ajomoro Eshiem, the community members who relied on mobile bankers often became victims of theft. Also, due to financial difficulties, members of the association who are traders were buying goods from the market on credit at extremely high rates. Now, through a manageable association of 30 contributors, members of the VSLA are able to make loans which they have three months to pay back at five percent interest.

While this is only a small group in the community of 376 adults, the businesses of the associates are those that feed members of the community, who rely on their shops for supplies since they cannot commute to larger markets on their own. "I sell rice in the village," Dorothy Ackah comments, "before I would have to buy the rice on credit at the market, but now I can buy it outright." Fellow business owners chime in, "my farm was destroyed by rains and I was able to take a small loan to not only buy food for my family, but also to buy the cassava I use to make fufu to sell to the local chop bar," Assuaku Manzah says. The loan not only helped her to directly provide for her family in time of trouble, but also allowed her to keep her business afloat. Other members of the association have used the fund's savings and social funds to do everything from the payment of school fees in difficult times, to hiring workers to help farm as they are growing old. Still others have joined and not yet borrowed at all. "I think it's important to show my support," says Nana Arnione Kojo, the newly appointed village chief.



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## Fish Processor Chalks 150% Profit for Adding Value

**Instead of the usual cement paper wrapping, Thomas applied new-acquired knowledge to make a difference.**



Thomas Suapim in safety gear displaying his neatly packaged and labelled fish products at the 2016 World Fisheries Day celebration, held in Cape Coast – Central Region - Ghana

**“Quality over quantity reaps benefits.”**

*Thomas Suapim  
Fish Processor, Shama,  
West Coast - Ghana*

**Fish processing and marketing in Ghana** constitute almost half of the fisheries workforce. For a country that depends on fish for most of its protein needs, the role of the sector can not be over-emphasized. Ghanaians consume an average of 38kgs of fish per person per annum, well above the global per capita fish consumption rate of 16kgs. In spite of the apparent potential of the fishing industry, the post-harvest players like fish processors are receiving lesser returns than their counterparts in other countries owing to lack of post-harvest value chain improvements and cheap but unhygienic fish processing practices which make their produce unable to meet both local and international market standards. Many fishing households in Ghana are getting poorer by the day due to post-harvest losses and the low returns.

In response to this situation, a US Government presidential Feed the Future Initiative - the USAID/Ghana Sustainable Fisheries Management Project, trained over 400 fish processors in Ghana’s west coast in a number of post-harvest value chain improvement interventions. These include hygienic fish handling, packaging and branding, a tour to facilities compliant with international standards and development of model kitchens.

At a 2016 World Fisheries Day event in Cape Coast, Ghana, Thomas Suapim, a beneficiary of the project interventions, demonstrated how an improvement in his fish processing skills has significantly increased his earnings. He sold value-added fish products for \$63; with his costs being only \$25 worth of raw materials, a profit of 150 per cent above the cost! “At least now I can afford a few basic needs such as a full day’s meal for my family,” he noted.

Thomas Suapim urged other fish processors gathered at the ceremony in Cape Coast to adopt hygienic fish handling practices, stressing that: “Quality over quantity reaps benefits.”

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## Savoring the Benefits of Fisheries Business Development Services

**2034 Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises have benefitted so far from business development training.**



Peace Abla Gavor, (middle) receiving her Exemplary Fish Practices Awards

**“My business has seen massive growth after the business development training. I now make more money because I have added value to my fish. I also have access to soft loans to expand my business”**

*Peace Abla Gavor, Fish Processor  
Elmina, Central Region*

“I wish I had participated in the post-harvest fisheries business development training program earlier” says Peace Abla Gavor, a 54 year old fish processor at Elmina in the Central region. She was struggling with the family business she inherited. After more than 30 years of stress and strain, her small enterprise fell on hard times. Peace’s children had to drop out of school to help keep the business running. The family was barely living from hand to mouth, a situation which is a major source of worry to her family.

In Ghana, despite the central role women play in feeding the nation, their empowerment is largely overlooked in the fisheries sector. Women consistently find themselves confined to the lowest end of the fisheries value chain - a position that is perpetuating and widening a gender-based disparity in income. Poor fish-handling and processing practices, inadequate records-keeping skills, illiteracy, and lack of access to loans also contribute to economic hardships that threaten entire families.

To help show women like Peace a better way, USAID through the Sustainable Fisheries Management Project has been working to support Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises along the coastal communities. With the project’s support, more than 2034 people, the majority being women-owned businesses, have been trained in business development skills.

Participants have learned about fish processing skills, food safety, packaging and marketing, financial management, and alternative livelihoods. They also received instruction on organizing and receiving soft loans from the financial market. The training adds value to the participants’ products, thus increasing sales and expanding operations. In turn, these business owners can pursue meaningful change and improve their lives.

After participating in a series of trainings, Peace moved away from her old method of business and has started practicing what she learned from the project. Today, Peace keeps proper records, has expanded her business and has been awarded the most exemplary individual fish handling and processing practice along the coast. “Thanks to USAID Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP) I can now enjoy much benefits from my business” she smiled.

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## New Oven Offers a Better Way to Make a Living in Fishing Communities

**110 fuel-efficient and profitable fish-smoking ovens called 'Ahotor' have been constructed across the nation's coastal regions.**



Fish processors experiencing the benefits of the 'Ahotor Oven'

**"I've been able to offer healthy fish to my customers and to make more money."**

*Abu Mohamed  
Planning officer, Shama District Assembly  
in the Western Region.*

**For Abu Mohamed**, a planning officer at Shama District Assembly in the Western Region, harnessing newly improved fish-processing technology has been a great choice. Abu is an early adopter of the new technology. More than 30,000 fish processors, mainly women, are engaged in the daily business of fish processing in Ghana. The majority are using traditional "Chorkor" ovens that expose them to plumes of smoke and health-related risks for respiratory disease, skin rashes and eye problems. The potential for cancer among consumers of fish smoked in Chorkor ovens was researched and reported by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research Food Research Institute. Excessive smoke deposition from incomplete combustion of wood and dripping of fat onto open flames causes carcinogenic organic compounds to settle on the product. Moreover, Chorkors burn excessive amounts of fuel, emitting more of the carbon that contributes to climate change.

The USAID Sustainable Fisheries Management Project realized there was a need for an improved oven. A better oven could enhance food security and business for many fish processors along Ghana's coast. The Project developed a new, more energy-efficient, and cost-effective stove design in collaboration with the Post-Harvest Unit of the Fisheries Commission and the Ghana Food Research Institute. SFMP then constructed 110 of the new "Ahotor" (comfort) ovens across Ghana's coastal regions in the last two years.

The fuel-efficient Ahotor oven uses about one-third less wood than a Chorkor to smoke the same quantity of fish. With reduced fuel costs, processors operate more profitably. And, with less smoke filling work areas, the processors literally enjoy a healthier atmosphere.

An Ahotor oven also saves time. "In the past, I used to process 10 baskets of fish in five days using the traditional oven. But with the Ahotor, I spend less than two days to process the same amount of fish," says Eva Atsitsogbi, Volta Regional President of the Ghana National Fish Traders and Processors Association. As part of its development program for 2018 through 2021, the Shama District Assembly will build 96 Ahotor ovens for the five main fishing communities in the area "This will help us produce wholesome fish products, create better job opportunities for youth, and increase the revenue base," says Mohamed. Emmanuel Kwarteng, a technical advisor with SNV responsible for post-harvest activities, believes the adoption of the oven by the District Assembly is a bellwether event that enhances the project and the Fisheries Commission's commitment to reduce serious health and environmental risks and to provide opportunities that raise the standard of living for fish processors.



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## USAID Builds Capacity 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. Women work from dusk to dawn to ensure fish are ready for the market. 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. However, their 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.



**“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.”**

Victoria Koomson, the Executive Director of CEWEFIA.

**The CEWEFIA fish processing facility is a blessing to us, the training we receive here is helping to transform the way we used to do business and the way we help our families”.**

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Women like Victoria Koomson, the Executive Director of the Central and Western Region Fish Mongers Improvement Association (CEWEFIA), a local non-governmental organization based in Elmina, provide support to these women to help them address these challenges. 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.

Now, the CEWEFIA’s newly upgraded demonstration center for small-scale fish processors and traders not only offers a safer and more comfortable place to work, it also meets the Fisheries Commission basic standards for local hygienic fish processing kitchens and offers training on exactly those things that she identified as needed by local women. Training programs offered by CEWEFIA now include 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. Separation of work areas is a core requirement for the new Class I Hygienic Fish Processing facility certification, developed and implemented by the Fisheries Commission and the Ghana National Standards Authority, with support from USAID. Felicia Mensah, a 59 year-old fish processor recounts her experience, “The CEWEFIA fish processing facility is a blessing to us, the training we receive here is helping to transform the way we used to do business and the way we help our families”.

CEWEFIA’s trainings have already improved the skills of more than 1,823 women processors over the last four years. But there are also direct benefits to CEWEFIA itself. USAID support has also strengthened CEWEFIA’s capacity in the areas of fundraising, financial management, and strategic planning. As a result, CEWEFIA has been able to raise funds from other sources such as FAO, the North American Women’s Association, Star Ghana and the BUSAC Fund, to support development of women processors in Elmina. Victoria Koomson believes that CEWEFIA is playing an important role in improving smoked fish quality in Ghana and the lives of fish processors themselves. “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”, she says proudly.





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## Fish Processors Adopt Hygienic Practices To Improve Quality Fish Consumption

**Small-scale fish processing** in Ghana contributes directly to the livelihoods of more than 30,000 women in 340 coastal communities. It provides income to meet basic household needs including food, health care, and school fees for children. However, most fish processors produce poor quality products due to limited knowledge about good hygiene. Fish receiving, washing, processing and packaging is often done in the same area which increases the

potential for cross-contamination between freshly delivered raw fish and finished products. Juliana Kuranu, a 42 year-old mother of three at Elmina in the Central Region, personally knows how poor hygienic practices affect fish processing businesses in her area. “Over the years I have seen how our practices not only affect us, but also traders and consumers of the fish that we process. It affects the whole community.”

To address this problem, the USAID Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP) partnered with the Ghana Fisheries Commission’s to develop programs that introduce fish processors to hygienic practices that boost business, improve livelihoods, and result in a safer finished product for consumers. To reach processors at the ground level, SFMP and the GFC engaged the Central and Western Fishmongers Improvement Association (CEWEFIA) and the Development Action Association (DAA), two local organizations that focus on developing capacity for women in the Central and Greater Accra regions of the country. To date, over 1,195 fish processors were trained on hygienic fish handling, processing and storage that results in higher market values for processed fish, decreased loss of processed products, and increased quality of product for consumers.

To ensure these practices continue to spread, the project supported a team including the Fisheries Commission’s Post-Harvest Unit, Ghana Standards Authority, Ghana Food and Drug Board, the Food Research Institute, University of Cape Coast, University of Ghana and the National Fish Processors and Traders Association (NAFPTA) to develop a certification scheme for fish processors. Called the ‘Class I Certification Scheme’, it lays out minimum standards for hygienic processing and provides the Fisheries Commission with a platform for continued training and certification of small-scale processors. Auditors certify small-scale processing operations that achieve minimum standards and provide guidance to processors that have not yet reached those standards. Thirteen fish processing facilities are already certified with many more requesting audits.

“We are happy to work with the fish processors on hygienic fish handling techniques”, says Josephine Opare Addo, a program officer with CEWEFIA. “We see that we are improving the supply of good quality, hygienic fish products for local consumers while improving the livelihoods of fish processors.” Like other processors that have been trained, Juliana is optimistic about her future. “Thanks to my training my business has improved and I can take care of my family needs.” USAID’s Sustainable Fisheries Management Project works in Ghana to improve the livelihoods of women processors and supports adoption of sustainable fisheries management approaches to rebuild targeted fish stocks on which people most depend.

**“Thanks to the training my business has improved and I can take care of my family needs.”**



Juliana Kuranu, Fish processor at Elmina, Central Region

**“We see that we are improving the supply of good quality, hygienic fish products for local consumers while improving the livelihoods of fish processors.”**

*- Josephine Opare Addo  
Program Officer, CEWEFIA*

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## VSLA Delivers A Better Future for Fishing Communities

**“Our standard of living here is far below other places. We don’t have access to any form of financial support to improve our businesses and make lives better for our families.”**



Anthony Eshi, a farmer at Ajomoro Eshiem, Western Region

**“Thanks to the USAID Sustainable Fisheries Management Project, our VSLA is supporting me to develop a 2-acre cocoa farm and another 2 acre co-coconut farm with a loan I received from our association. I plan to apply for more loans in the future to develop other projects”**

*Anthony Eshi*

**Anthony Eshi, is a 38 year old vegetable farmer** at Ajomoro Eshiem in the Nzema East District of the Western region of Ghana. Access to finance to expand his farming business and to improve the livelihoods of his family remain his major source of worry. “Our standard of living here is far below other places. We don’t have access to any form of financial support to improve our businesses and make lives better for our families. We can’t borrow from a bank”, he says.

In partnership with Ghana’s Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (MOFAD) and Fisheries Commission, USAID’s Sustainable Fisheries Management Project works to address the lack of capital that Anthony and others face in coastal villages across Ghana. SFMP has been introducing Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) schemes to help diversify and grow local fishing communities’ economies. With SFMP support, six VSLAs now are operating with a total membership of 155 people in five communities across Ghana’s Western regions. Men and women participate in almost equal numbers with 70 females and 85 males. The Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) bring together community members who save for mutually agreeable objectives, and then take out small individual loans from those savings for their projects.

Anthony Eshie is already a beneficiary of his VSLA at Ajomoro Eshiem and is enthusiastic about what he has been able to do as a result of his small loans. “Through the association, I borrowed GHC300 (US\$66) to buy fertilizer and other farming input for my vegetable farm which in the past was very difficult for me. Last year, my wife, Sarah Cudjoe, also secured a loan of GHC500 (US\$110) from the association to expand her fish processing business”. Anthony Eshie and Sarah Cudjoe, like many other beneficiaries of the VSLAs, are enthusiastic about the promises of the scheme. “Thanks to the USAID Sustainable Fisheries Management Project, our VSLA is supporting me to develop a 2-acre cocoa farm and another 2 acre coconut farm with a loan I received from our association. I am plan to apply for more loans in the future to develop other projects” says Anthony.

“We are happy to work with the communities on Village Savings and Loan Association” says Adiza Owusu, a community development worker with Hen Mpoano, a local NGO partner of SFMP. “We hope that the VSLAs enable community members to contribute to their own livelihood improvement efforts such as fish post-harvest processing and supplemental agriculture.” For his part, Anthony Eshie is optimistic about the future of his VSLA membership. “I wish my community was introduced to the Village Savings and Loan Association scheme earlier. I could have done a lot more” he says, and the cheerfulness in his voice makes you believe him.

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## Increasing the Value of Fish, Certification Scheme Promises Healthy Fish Consumption

**“We can confidently buy fish from certified processors and traders, knowing that the products are healthy for consumption. I hope more processors get on board to facilitate the work of the Fisheries Commission of promoting high food safety standards for consumers of fish and fishery products.”**

*Mavis Tetteh, Resident of Accra*



Mrs. Emelia Nortey, a fish processor (right) in a handshake with the Deputy Minister for Fisheries and Aquaculture Development, Mr. Francis Ato Codjoe as she receives her class I certificate.

**Mavis Tetteh**, a resident of Accra is optimistic that the new certification scheme introduced by the Fisheries Commission would translate into improvements in the quality of processed fish and fishery products. Mavis, like many Ghanaians is a consumer of locally processed fish, especially smoked small pelagic. She indicated how, hitherto, she had been concerned about the quality of processed fish in the local market. Fish provides 50% of animal protein consumed in Ghana. This figure exceeds by two-fold the FAO estimate of 22% for sub-Saharan Africa, demonstrating the importance of fish for food security in Ghana. However, poor fish product quality coupled with unhygienic handling practices are major consumer concerns for the local fish processing sector. Chemical and microbial contamination occur at multiple points of the fishery value chain; processing, storage, transport, sales of fish and fishery products. Fish processing is the main economic activity of many women living along the coast of Ghana. An estimated 75% of the domestic marine and freshwater catch is smoked and sold in major markets across the country.

It is against this background that, The US Government’s Feed the Future Initiative through the Ghana Sustainable Fisheries Management Project collaborated with the Post-Harvest Unit of the Fisheries Commission and other organizations (Ghana Standards Authority, Food and Drugs Authority, Food Research Institute, University of Ghana, University of Cape Coast, and the National Fish Processors and Traders Association), to promote the production and consumption of healthy and quality fish in Ghana by instituting a certification scheme for fish processors that adhere to the adoption of basic food safety standards. This certification scheme has been named, the class I recognition scheme.

The Class I certification will ensure fish processors and traders adopt internationally accepted standards for hygienic fish handling and processing, promoting consumption of healthy fish and improving market access to fish processors. The Ministry plans to leverage the scheme to expand access to training and capacity building in livelihood improvement activities for small-scale fish processors along the entire value chain. Fish processors and traders who pass the criteria will be given certificates and labels.

Speaking at the launch of the scheme on July 5, 2019, Mr. Steven E. Hendrix, the Acting Deputy USAID Mission Director is hopeful about the prospects of the scheme. “Ensuring that processors can work in a clean, hygienic environment and encouraging the use of the Ahotor ovens that reduce harmful smoke emissions will greatly benefit the health of these women, their families, and their communities” he said.

Expressing his joy at the introduction of a certification scheme, the Hon. Deputy Minister for Fisheries and Aquaculture Development, Mr. Francis Ato Codjoe said, “Henceforth, the Ministry will raise awareness for Ghanaians to patronize healthy fish from fish processors and traders who have been certified by the Ministry”.

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## Microfinance and Small Loan Center Comes Through for Fish Processors

**Access to loans is pivotal** in enhancing resilience of women owned businesses and lack of credit stifles the contribution of women to the socioeconomic development of their communities. Women fish processors over the years have been faced with the challenge of meeting requirements set by traditional credit institutions to access loans due to the informal nature of the fish processing business. High interest rates coupled

with the lack of collateral makes it almost impossible for women fish processors to access formal loan facilities. Consequently, women fish processors have not been able to grow their businesses and ultimately, support their families.

Realizing the constraints confronting women fish processors in connection with accessing loans, the USAID Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP) approached the Microfinance and Small Loans Center (MASLOC), which is the government institution mandated to provide, manage and regulate approved funds for microfinance and small credit schemes and programs, to facilitate access to small loans for groups of fish processors. These women belong to Village Savings and Loans Associations formed by the project.

MASLOC, which is funded by the central government, granted loans of one thousand Ghana Cedis (~US\$ 200) to a total of 181 women fish processors in different communities across the coast (31 in Tema, 17 in Dzemeni, 50 in Nungua, 33 in Elmina, 17 in Teshie, and 33 in Keta) at an interest rate of 2% per month, with a payment plan of one hundred and seventy-seven Ghana Cedis (~US\$35) every month.

Speaking on the MASLOC loan facility, Doris Owusu, the SFMP Program Specialist who led the engagement with MASLOC to facilitate access to the loan facilities for the women said, “Even though it took over 14 months from the initial application for the first group to receive their loans, the women were still grateful, because low fish catch together with lack of complimentary livelihoods had eroded their working capital. The MASLOC loans came with low interest rates compared to credit facilities from other financial agencies and repayments terms were flexible. MASLOC acknowledged the informal nature of the fish processing sector and made room to accommodate the financial needs of the women.”

With these loans, the women were able to invest in their businesses and also serve as shock absorbers for periods when there were shortages of fish at the landing beaches. Madam Beatrice Markwei, a fish processor in Teshie who is a loan beneficiary expressed how the loan facility helped her to continue with her business in the face of low fish catches, said “This helps me to contribute to household expenses.” Five groups (Tema, Nungua, Elmina, Teshie, Keta) out of six have already paid back their loans and are looking forward to applying for another loan facility from MASLOC. It is the hope of the women fish processors that more microfinance agencies will open their doors to assist them to scale up their businesses, ultimately, increasing their profits and financial resilience so that they can sustain their economic contribution to the household and the upbringing of their children.

**“Low fish catch in the midst of increased household expenses have depleted our working capital over the years. With the one thousand Ghana Cedis (~US\$200) MASLOC loan facility, I am now able to buy frozen fish to smoke and sell even when there is no fish at the landing beach. This helps me to contribute my quota to household needs.”**

*Beatrice Markwei – Loan beneficiary, Teshie*



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## Ahotor Oven User Wins National Best Fish Processor Award

**“By adopting hygienic fish handling practices introduced to us by SFMP and smoking on the “Ahotor” oven, my fish is now acceptable on the international market due the low microbial load and Polycyclic Aro-matic Hydrocarbons (PAH) level below the European Union standards”.**



Eva Atitsogbe, 2019 national best fish processor standing behind her Ahotor oven at Dzemeni in the South Dayi district of the Volta region.

**“With over 70% of fish processed through smoking, the adoption of hygienic fish handling practices and the use of a clean smoking hygienic oven like the “Ahotor” is the best way to secure the income of fish processors, ensure the consumption of safe fish”. She pointed out that according to FAO, Ghana loses about 20% of all fish harvested due to poor post-harvest processing practices**

*Doris Owusu, SFMP Program Specialist*

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Eva Atitsogbe, a 60-year old mother of five at Dzemeni in the South Dayi District of the Volta Region was selected as the 2019 national best fish processor at the 35th national farmer’s day celebration held on December 6th in Ho, Volta Region. For many women like Eva, fish processing is their main source of livelihood and the profits from fish trading contribute to the upkeep of their families. However, some women have not been able to earn much due to losses incurred from poor fish handling and processing practices. The post-harvest fish value chain has been challenged with the absence or unavailability of appropriate and efficient technologies on reducing post-harvest losses and processing fish in a hygienic manner. Many of these women who have limited knowledge in hygienic fish handling and access to improved technologies like the “Ahotor” oven are usually disadvantaged.

The USAID funded Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP) recognizing the direct link between post-harvest handling and post-harvest losses, over the years worked hand-in-hand with the Fisheries Commission of the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development and its partners to train and build the capacity of fish processors like Eva in hygienic fish handling and processing, and the adoption and use of the “Ahotor” oven which uses less fuel wood and smoked fish with lower levels of Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons, a known carcinogen. Attributing her prize to the use of the “Ahotor” oven introduced to her and the hygienic fish handling training she received from SFMP, the 2019 national best fish processor says the “Ahotor” oven came as a very good and timely intervention for her as many people prefer her techniques of smoking fish, earning her many customers. “Smoked fish on the “Ahotor” oven looks very ‘beautiful’ due to the low smoke deposited on it during processing compared to the “Chorkor” or the metal drum kiln” she remarks.

Looking back at how far she has come, Eva recounts how she used to spend a lot of money on fuel wood, which increased her cost of production and affected her profit margin. “I used to spend a lot of money on fuelwood to smoke fish when I was using the “Chorkor” smoker. But with the “Ahotor” it is about 38% more energy efficient than the “Chorkor” smoker, I spend less money on fuelwood to smoke the same quantity of fish. Now I make more profits and I contribute more to the household” she says.

For Eva and others who use the “Ahotor” oven, the future looks bright as she intends to expand her business to other fishing communities to create more employment for the people, especially women living in those communities. Not only is Eva’s fish preferred on the local market, but she is also now able to sell on the international market as she has a Class I certificate. SFMP program specialist, Doris Owusu underscores the need for hygienic fish handling and processing in securing the livelihoods of fish processors.



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## VSLA Improves Resiliency of Rural Women in the Volta Region

**“We were able to support group members by granting loans without interest before the closed season with a relaxed payback period. Members expanded their businesses and supported themselves through the closed season. With the COVID-19 pandemic, initially it was a problem with some of our members facing low or no sales at the market. We were able to grant interest free loans to members to support themselves, with no pressure to pay back the principal immediately. Almost all group members have taken loans to support their families and their businesses. All that a member requires to access a loan is a guarantor who should also be a member of the group.”**

*Madam Bernice Dzaniekpor, Dekaworwor VSLA Group Leader*



**“The Dekaworwor VSLA group is really improving the economic resilience of these women fish processors in Dzita.”**

*Mrs. Doris Owusu, Market Development Specialist, SFMP*

Access to finance is pivotal to enhancing the resilience of women owned businesses in fishing communities. Due to the requirement for collateral and the high interest rates from formal banks, it is almost impossible for these women to access loans to support their businesses and families. Their businesses remain small while they struggle to meet household needs.

To enhance women fishers’ capacity to establish and maintain a strong savings culture and create a sustainable savings and loans system for their businesses the USAID Ghana Sustainable Fisheries Management Project, in May 2018 facilitated the formation of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) to members of the National Fish Processors and Traders Association in the Volta Region. A VSLA is a member-managed group of 10-25 people who save together and take small loans from their savings at the end of each cycle, usually nine to twelve months. Fourteen groups in Volta’s fishing communities meet once in a week after every market day and contribute between GHC 5 to 25 GHC (US\$0.85 - \$4.25) and a social welfare fund of GHC1.00 (US\$0.17) each. Each week’s contribution is marked with a blue stamp in a personal passbook.

The Dekaworwor (Ewe word meaning “Unity”) VSLA based in Dzita village in the Volta Region has continually improved since its inception in June 2018 and has become a model group for other VSLAs. Beginning with 14 members, the group’s membership has grown to 71 people divided into 3 groups. From June 2019 to June 2020, they were able to accumulate GHC 51,945 (US\$8,830) in savings with a social welfare fund of GHC 3,060 (US\$520) and disbursed loans amounting to GHC 25,400 (US\$4,318). The loans for 2019 accumulated an interest of GHC 6,390 (US\$1,086) at 6 percent per month and a payback period of three months. Savings and interest accumulated are shared among the group members at the end of each year, based on the number of stamps a member has in her passbook.

The group served a critical role in supporting fish processors and traders through the 2019 closed season for canoe fisheries. Before the closed season, the group shared out their savings so members would be able to buy, smoke, and store fish for sale during the closed season. With the recent COVID-19 pandemic, the group granted interest free loans to members to enable them cope with the disruption in their economic activities. The group supports other VSLA’s through leadership visits in neighboring communities, sharing experiences with them. Speaking about future plans, the secretary said, “We hope to seek support to train our group members in financial and business management skills so they can improve their businesses and also convince more community members to join us.”

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# **GENDER MAINSTREAMING**



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# The Government of Ghana Affirms its Commitment to Gender Mainstreaming in the Fisheries Sector

In Ghana, women play important roles in the fisheries sector and provide most of the labor in the post-harvest sector, while many own canoes and finance fishing operations. In the past, women have not been fully involved in fisheries management and their involvement in the sector has been largely invisible. Given that the government of Ghana is committed strengthening rights and promoting gender equality within all sectors of development, the SFMP deemed that it is important to increase the voice of women in fisheries management. In collaboration with the leadership of the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development and the Fisheries Commission, SFMP assisted the Ministry in the development of a gender mainstreaming strategy. In a show of its commitment, the Honorable Minister, Sherry Ayittey, signed the strategy during the first quarter of FY 2017. The national gender strategy for the fisheries sector is important because it is the first step towards building the Ministry's capacity to engage in gender analysis and planning. It will also enable the Ministry to incorporate gender into its management; promote the use of sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis, and establish accountability in its efforts to mainstream gender.

The overall goal of the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy for the Fisheries Sector is to empower all actors in the fisheries sector—and in particular women—through their active participation in fisheries management and decision making, facilitating their access to and control of resources and opportunities for an enhanced valuation of their contributions for an equitable and sustainable development of the fisheries sector. Furthermore, the strategy has six strategic objectives:

1. **Restructure MOFAD/FC's program work** and cooperation with stakeholders in the fisheries sector from a gender perspective;
2. **Strengthen gender mainstreaming capacity** at policy and implementation levels of the fisheries value chain;
3. **Create an enabling environment** to enhance the process of gender responsive fisheries management to ensure women and men have equal opportunities as fisheries decision-makers and co-managers;

4. **Strengthen capacities of women and men fisheries associations** including CSOs to solve problems through open and transparent communications, networking, and shared decision making;

5. **Improve the fisheries value** (through technological innovation and infrastructures, finance and research) and provide post-harvest training and technical know-how to women and men engaged directly and indirectly in the fisheries sector;

6. **Strengthen knowledge creation** and information management of the fisheries sector through gender responsive monitoring and evaluation.

After adopting the gender strategy, the Fisheries Commission continued to incorporate gender into its management. Promotion of women's participation in all activities coupled with sustainable strategic interventions will greatly improve the fisheries sector. A first step towards implementing the strategy was a series of training workshops for zonal fisheries officers and partners from the Central, Western, and Volta regions of Ghana. During this training, the participants reviewed the MOFAD and FC structure and applied a gender marker to help improve gender equity and empowerment within the two institutions. The participants developed a gender mainstreaming action plan with implementation options. The action plan sets out how to address gender issues in the fisheries sector and serves as a basis and referral document for monitoring and compliance. In conjunction with the training, SFMP provided gender mainstreaming coaching for the zonal officers. The goal of the coaching was to help the zonal officers implement the gender mainstreaming strategy in their zones.

Assessing the impacts of the coaching, one zonal officer stated that as a result of the gender mainstreaming training and coaching, she has been able to establish a communications committee to specifically address gender mainstreaming in day-to-day operations. She was happy to report that there are both men and women represented in the committee—which is important to ensure that all gender aspects are considered. Another zonal officer in the Cape Coast Region developed a protocol for organizing programs that ensure equal participation of men and women. After they attended the SFMP trainings, both officers trained their zonal colleagues on the National Gender Mainstreaming Strategy—a good sign that the gender mainstreaming knowledge is being spread more broadly among government fisheries extension officers.

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## Catalyzing Change in Fisheries Management Women uniting against unsustainable fishing practices



Emelia addressing a group of fish processors from the Western Region at a regional fish processors meeting.

**“I grew up knowing that the ocean’s fish stock is replenished through rainfall and lightning storm but now I know better. Through the ICFG and now the SFMP project, I understand that replenishing the ocean’s fish stock can only happen when we fish right and allow fish to spawn at least once in their life time. This is why I am at the forefront and saying no to bad and small fish caught using unapproved fishing methods.”**

**Women play significant role** in the artisanal Fisheries sector in Ghana; from net to plate women are the key players in this value chain. They own canoes; pre-finance fishing trips; they (sometimes) set the price of fish; buy the fish; process and sell at the various markets – both local and national markets – where the final consumers get to take a bite of the fish on their plate. So women have the power to determine what fish gets to the market and by extension what fish is eaten by the consumer. This power, albeit latent, can be used to catalyze change in the fisheries and contribute to saving the fisheries from collapse.

Despite the significant role women play they are not well represented in fisheries management processes in Ghana. But some women are changing all that in their communities because they understand how intricately their livelihood is woven into the fishing industry; they know a collapse means an end to their livelihood and the future of their communities. Emelia Abaka-Edu, a fish processor from Axim in the Western Region, is one of such women.

Emelia originally trained as a hairdresser from the Takoradi Polytechnic but later took up fish processing, an occupation she inherited from her mother. Her awakening started with the USAID coastal project, the ICFG initiative. She got the opportunity to go on a study tour to Senegal to learn best practices in fishing. What she witnessed gave her hope that the situation in Ghana can be remedied and she also recognizes that for that change to come it must start with her.

She now uses the knowledge she has acquired through the exposure she’s gained on the ICFG and now the Sustainable Fisheries Management project to push for reform in the fisheries management on national organization she belongs to. Such organization includes the Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council and the National Fish Processors and Traders Association. Her message is simple: “say no to bad fish” and this is the message she is preaching to both fishermen and fish processors alike, calling on them to be steward of the resource that sustains their livelihood.

Emelia is just one out of the 2.7 million of people who live along the 550km coastline of Ghana. What she has committed herself to is still work in progress that will need the support of everyone to see a sustainably managed fishery in Ghana.

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## USAID Recognizes Women's Role in Fisheries

### Two fish processors receive best practices awards at National Farmers' Day Event



Mercy Frimpong smoking fish on improved fish stove. She (down right) displays equipment received at award ceremony

**“Motivation amongst the women is now high; I see many of them making an effort now to also adopt safe fish handling methods”**

*Mercy Frimpong Fish Processor, Winneba*

**Women are the backbone** of the fishing industry in Ghana, as they generate an important share of the industry's revenue through fish processing. Comprising 50% of the fisheries workforce, women's roles cannot be over-emphasized.

Along Ghana's coast fish processing is usually done by women, many of whom also own canoes and finance fishing trips. From the moment fish are landed at the shore, the chief fishmonger (konkohemaa), a woman, negotiates the price of the fish and sets a uniform rate for sale. The fish is sold to women, most of whom smoke it, while others fry or salt the fish and dry them. Other women sell it in its fresh state, while still others clean and dress the fresh fish for buyers.

During processing of smoked, salted, or fried fish, many of the processors do not observe safe handling or hygienic practices. Some dry the fish or cut them on the bare floor, while others leave the fish at the mercy of houseflies. Packaging of the final product — usually smoked — is also done using brown cement paper, which is not good for consumption.

Through the five-year USAID-funded food security initiative — Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP) – fish processors are being engaged to exhibit outstanding leadership in advocacy for responsible fishing and safe post-harvest fish handling practices, and two women who excel in these areas have received awards.

The category on Fisheries Best Practices is the first of its kind, given during the 31st National Farmers Day celebration, held on December 4, 2015, under the theme: “Transform Ghana: Invest in Agriculture.” The award beneficiaries received fish processing equipment intended to motivate other women to observe safe fish handling. Winners Ekuia Emissah from Apam and Mercy Frimpong from Winneba both live in the Central Region. Ekuia has shown great leadership qualities in supporting other women to adopt good fishing practices. Mercy has adopted a new smoking technology to reduce smoke and fuel wood during processing. Both are vocal and advocate for responsible fishing.

Selection of candidates was done collaboratively with the Fisheries Commission and the relevant local government units. Eligibility criteria include membership to a recognized fish processors group, active involvement in group activities and proof of leadership qualities, and adoption of new fish processing technology or of responsible fishing practices.

The project intends to scale up its best practices awards competition to other coastal fishing communities and incrementally build their capacity to say “NO” to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

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# **COMBATTING CHILD LABOR AND TRAFFICKING**



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## FIRST PERSON STORY

# Victims of Child Trafficking Speak Out

**Kojo was only a young boy of 12,** he was trafficked from Ghana's Central Region to Monrovia, Liberia and forced into hard labor. Not in school, a middle man came to his community in Moree and found him loitering on the beaches. He was able to convince Kojo and his parents that for a little bit of work mending fishing nets, he would be able to go to school and send money home to his family. So Kojo went with the man, but said,

**Kojo's experience is now helping to save lives; three children trafficked to Ivory Coast had been returned within 6 months when advocacy began.**



Kojo, Child labor Victim, turned-advocate, sharing his experience with fisher folk in Elmina, Central Region

**“Let my experience be an example; when I was trafficked to Monrovia, I was not only put to hard labor, but routinely beaten and underfed. A near-death experience led to my eventual escape.”**

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“The promises that were made to me were not what they seemed.”

Just like Kojo, many children along Ghana's coast, are unjustly trafficked abroad and put to work, suffering mental and physical abuse, kept from attending school and deprived of their childhood. In Ghana, tens of thousands of children are trafficked as early as the age of four. USAID, through the Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP), is working to curb Child Labor and Trafficking in Ghana's fishing communities. The Feed the Future initiative targets vulnerable households and persons in extreme poverty through community advocates trained by the program. Advocates are able to identify risks, navigate difficult discussions and in some cases, directly intervene to stop Child Labor and Trafficking practices.

In Ghana's fishing communities, Child Labor and Trafficking is an issue of extreme poverty exacerbated by worsening catches along the coast. The Sustainable Fisheries Management Project is a five-year cooperative agreement with the goal to rebuild targeted marine fish stocks that have seen major declines in landings over the last decade.

The population of children in Ghana is 8.7 million ranging between the ages of five to 17 years. Over 15,000 are involved in fishing, with tens of thousands trafficked from as early as age four. Through SFMP, 40 Anti-Child Labor and Trafficking Advocates and 38 Community Child Protection Committee (CCPC) members have been trained on Child Protection Strategies, Concept of Child Labor and Trafficking, the Children's Act and Conventions on the Rights of the Child

“My experience should be example for all who want to practice child labor. After pleading that I was too sick to work, I was still forced to go fishing with a crew. Angry with my performance, my master pushed me overboard on the high seas at 3:00 am. I saw another canoe heading toward me and I joined the canoe and was fortunate to arrive on land.”

Kweku was trafficked to Monrovia by a member of his extended family. “If I knew then what I know now I would never allow it again,” his mother says, “If family can so badly mistreat children, then what of those men that I don't know?” Kweku tells others in his community to beware of the intentions of those that know of “work abroad.” His brother and sister were also trafficked, his sister returned pregnant, but his brother is yet to return.

Their stories have turned many families in the community away from the false promises of Child Labor and Trafficking. As at now, three children who were trafficked to Ivory Coast have been returned to their families due to these interventions. They have also helped to convince four sets of parents, who had previously made plans to send their children away, to change their minds.



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## Fishers Adopt Strategy to Eliminate Child Labor in Ghana

**Child labor reduces economic development in Ghana as it reduces the potential of future generations to become full and productive citizens of our society.**



Adjoa Mansah, Fish processor and Child Labor advocate at Elmina, Central Region

**“I am very sure that if Government supports the implementation of the Anti-Child Labour and Trafficking Strategy we can eliminate the practice from our communities”**

*Adjoa Mansah  
Fish Processor*

**Adjoa Mansah, a 46 year old mother of ten**, works as a fish processor in Elmina, a fishing village in Ghana’s central region. Adjoa is one of many parents with a child who became a victim of child trafficking. “My son was requested by a relative to stay with him in Kumasi, the Ashanti region. Then, one day my son called to tell me that he was suffering due to the long hours he was working selling alcoholic drinks. A few weeks after I brought him back from Kumasi he fell sick and died.”

It is estimated that there are over 2.7 million child laborers in Ghana with the largest employers of child labor in the fishing, cocoa and artisanal mining sectors.

“Child labor affects economic development in Ghana. It deprives children of their potential to grow into fully productive citizens, harms them mentally and physical, and affects their productivity later in life as adults. We are losing an important part of our future as this practice reduces the ability to contribute to the wellbeing and stability of the country”, says Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (MOFAD), Elizabeth Naa Afoley Quaye.

Responding to this problem, USAID’s Sustainable Fisheries Management Project worked closely with the Ministry and the Ghana Fisheries Commission to draft a national fisheries sector Anti-Child Labor and Trafficking Strategy that was adopted on October 23, 2018. This policy supports Ghana in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals aimed at eradicating forced labor and ending modern slavery and human trafficking in all forms.

Now, SFMP and government staff are implementing the strategy by training fisheries zonal officers who serve as extension agents in fishing villages across Ghana. Their daily contact with communities puts them on the front line of identifying potentially trafficked children. Community leaders and local government officials also are being trained and in Ghana’s Central Region, a major source area for trafficked children, District Assemblies are now including programs in their five-year development plan to help end this practices. To date, 240 anti-child labor advocates trained under the joint SFMP-Government program have banded together to form community child protection committees in 14 coastal fishing communities.

Thanks to USAID SFMP interventions, community members like Adjoa Mansah are now aware of the dangers of child labour and trafficking. “I don’t want to see this happen to other parents so I have decided to join the campaign against child labor and trafficking in my area” says Adjoa. “I am very sure that with SFMP and Ghana government support we can eliminate the practice from our communities”, she says with hope in her voice.

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## FIRST PERSON STORY

### Child Labor Practitioner, Turned-Advocate

#### A Mother and Now an Advocate for Keeping Children Safe and in School



Araba Takyiwa at far left/rear with 3 of her children in school uniforms; and her neighbors - 2nd and 3rd right/rear; and their schooled children; beside them are Project staff

**"I will use my own story as a means to advocate against child labour and trafficking in Elmina."**

Araba Takyiwa, 46, a mother of seven who trafficked her 13 year old daughter and allowed her sons aged 7 and 10 years to labor in fisheries instead of attending school is now an anti-child labor and trafficking advocate who is helping change the lives of her own children and those of others in her poor fish-ing community.

Elmina is one of the largest fishing communities in Ghana with a vast landing site that accommodates its own fisher folks as well as migrants from other communities within the same Central Region, such as Moree, Anomabo, Apam, Abandzi, Winneba, Komenda etc). The situation has resulted in a rise in child labor activities in the community and environs.

Almost 85 per cent of Elmina's population, including migrants, keeps their children out of school so they can labor in fisheries or in other hazardous work to earn income for their family. Some even push their children into sexual activities in exchange for fish, or in exchange for money, traffick them to other countries. Not only are these children's lives and health endangered, but they lose out on the very education that might help them escape this cycle of poverty and child labour.

USAID is helping change this through the Ghana Sustainable Fisheries Management Project component on behavior change communications aimed at training community anti-Child Labor and Trafficking (CLaT) Advocates. These advocates counsel households who engage their children in hazardous work or traffick them, on the dangers that come with this way of life – health hazards and in some cases, even loss of their children's lives. And, they encourage parents to keep their children out of work and in school.

Araba Takyiwa is a beneficiary of the USAID/SFMP Anti-Child Labor Campaign; she is a 46-year old mother of seven and a fish processor in Elmina. In need of money, in 2010 Araba trafficked her 13 year old daughter to Ivory Coast and sent her young sons to work in fisheries. In spite of her efforts, Araba has not been able to locate and bring back her daughter. But it is not too late for her sons. Today, Araba sends them to school. And, she is spreading the word throughout the community, helping others see the longer term benefits to their children, their families, and their community when children stay in school and out of hazardous labour and trafficking. Araba hopes her own personal story of loss is helping others decide that they too want a brighter future for their children. And to realize that such a future starts by keeping children in school.

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## USAID Anti-Child Labor Strategy Finds Success in Coastal Fishing Communities

Joseph Kwesi Arthur, a 12-year old boy from Biriwa, a fishing community in the Central Region, is one of the latest Ghanaian children to be rescued from child labor. Joseph was sent away by his parents in 2017 at the age of 10 to stay with relatives due to the economic hardship facing his parents. Joseph's parents depend on fishing for their livelihood, economic income and food security. Like many other fishing communities in the region, Biriwa is confronting

the continued dwindling of small pelagic fish supply, sardinella, small mackerel, and anchovies, often referred to as 'the people's fish' due to overfishing and other poor management practices.

Available data from the Fisheries Commission indicates that approximately 50% of animal protein uptake nationally is from fish. This puts many families and households in the Central Region, known for its dependence on fishing at increased risk to participate in child labor and trafficking due to declining catches. As Joseph's mother Ama Awoye lamented, "We can't even provide daily meals for our family. It sometimes drives me to tears." She adds, "In the past, when we used to get enough fish, our lives were not like this, but now sometimes we have to beg for food."

As stocks continue to decline, Joseph's family experience reflects the problems and dangers confronting families and their children in fishing communities throughout the Central Region. Because of dwindling fish catches families are compelled to send away their children because they are no longer able to care for them.

The USAID/Ghana Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP) worked in collaboration with the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development over the last four years to develop a national strategy on anti-child labor and trafficking for the fisheries sector. With SFMP support, 240 anti-child labor advocates were trained and now are active across 14 coastal communities in the Central Region, a major source-area of trafficked children.

Through the USAID and Ghana government supported implementation of the anti-child labor and trafficking strategy, Ama became aware of how some children sent away are often exposed to life-threatening dangers. She then decided to go for Joseph who is living with a relative in Cote d'Ivoire "When I watched the video from SFMP and I saw how some children are mistreated, I got scared for my son and decided to go for him" said Ama. When Ama got to Cote d'Ivoire she found her son working on fish boats with other children under tedious conditions. She then talked to the boat owner who agreed to allow her to bring her son back home.

Through implementation of the Anti-Child Labor Strategy, people like Ama are increasingly aware of the dangers of child labor. New child protection committees are being set up all through the Central Region, and coastal districts are budgeting resources to fund more activities to combat child labor and trafficking into their medium term development plans. "Thanks to USAID, once I knew about the dangers of child labor, I went to find my son," said Ama. Now that Ama was able to bring Joseph home, he now has started school with the support of some community members.

**"I want to go to school so that I can become a big man in the future"**



Joseph Kwesi Arthur, a victim of child labor, Biriwa, Central region

**"Thanks to USAID for educating me about the impact of Child labour and its dangers. Now I have brought my son home."**

- Ama Awoye, Kwesi's mother

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## Fishing Communities Increase Effort Against Child Labor and Trafficking

**80 Child Protection Committee members have benefitted from USAID training in the Elmina and Moree Community.**



Paramount Chief of Elmina, Nana Kojo Konduah (right) at the durbar organized in Elmina to validate the Anti-Child Labor and Trafficking Action Plan

**“Any child found loitering at the beach will be chased to his or her parents and the parents will be charged to send their children to school”**

*Nana Kojo Conduah,  
Paramount Chief of the Elmina*

Child labor and trafficking still remain a major challenge confronting the socio-economic development in most countries across West Africa. In Ghana one in five children is employed as a child laborer or trafficked as a ‘commodity for monetary gain’. This situation is especially prevalent in the coastal fishing communities where children are used as laborers and also serve as source for trafficking children to other areas.

Fishing is one of the most dangerous occupations in the world. The involvement of children in fishing represents one of the worst forms of child labor. In many occasions the children are denied access to education and many other opportunities required for creating a good life to become responsible adults. Some are exposed to life-threatening events at sea like rain storms, cold weather without proper gear and risk of drowning. Girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse; damaging their physical, mental and emotional well-being.

With USAID funding support through the Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP), the Fisheries Commission is working with local traditional authorities to combat child labor and trafficking in coastal fishing communities. In cooperation with Fisheries Commission’s staff and others, the USAID project facilitated the creation of 80 Child Protection Committees that include sub-chiefs, opinion leaders and child advocates in Elmina and Moree, coastal communities in the Central Region. Empowered by their training, child protection committee members embarked on a campaign that included house-to-house visits and public dialogues, community drama events, and local radio programs to create awareness of the dangers of child labor and trafficking. Recovered victims of child labor and trafficking are encouraged to share their experiences in their communities.

The impact so far is promising as the Paramount Chief of Elmina in the Central Region, Nana Kojo Conduah IV and his community are poised to eliminate all forms of child labor by developing Anti-Child Labor and Trafficking Action Plan to facilitate children’s access to education. “Any child found loitering at the beach will be chased to his or her parents and they will be charged to send their children to school”, says Nana.

Nana is convinced that with the adoption of the Anti-Child Labor and Trafficking Action Plan in his community, children would have access to education and a better life conditions. He was full of praise for USAID for helping to develop the plan for his community. “Thanks to USAID’s for helping us to develop the Anti-Child Labor and Trafficking Action Plan. This would help provide a better future for our children” says Nana.

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**PREVENTING THE SPREAD AND  
MITIGATING THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19  
AMONG VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS IN  
FISHING COMMUNITIES**



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## Diversified Livelihoods for Fisherfolk

**“To have another income source to help provide for my children is an opportunity that makes the financial burden on me lighter.”**

*Florence Arthur, Fish Processor*



Women fish processors undergoing training in soap making as part of the diversified livelihoods activities.

**“The COVID – 19 pandemic created some disruption to the livelihoods of youth who were already facing low incomes because of dwindling fish catches. The SFMP’s livelihood interventions therefore ensure that they do not become vulnerable. They are able to earn decent incomes to take care of themselves and support their households as well.”**

*Esther Aba Eshun, SFMP Livelihoods Specialist*

**Florence Arthur is a 30-year old fish processor** at Mumford, Central region, whose fish processing business was already facing challenges due to dwindling fish stocks and now exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. A single mother of four, she was dependent on a single source of income, which is the fish processing business she runs with her 50-year-old mother to cater for her family. “When the pandemic started, we saw a decline in patronage of our fish products. Coupled with already dwindling fish stocks, it was difficult for us to make ends meet,” she said.

Like Florence, a number of residents of local communities along the coast of Ghana derive their livelihoods solely from the artisanal fisheries sector. This situation has created uncertainties and hardship for many families, given the seasonality of fish and downward spiral of fewer fish landed by the artisanal fleet over the years.

In a bid to encourage livelihood diversification for vulnerable fishing households, the USAID funded Ghana Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP) is facilitating diversified livelihoods for vulnerable fisheries dependent households, with a focus on youth and women.

So far, 100 people (98 women, 2 men) have been trained in soap making, 12 people (11 men, 1 woman) were trained in installation of digital satellite television and home air conditioners and repair. Twenty-two people (all women) were trained in making pastries and bread. Each of the 134 beneficiaries were provided with tools and equipment valued on average GHS 208 (approximately US\$ 59) at the end of their respective trainings to facilitate setting up their own businesses. The SFMP livelihood interventions also included training beneficiaries in financial management to equip them with basic skills to sustainably run their start-up businesses.

Florence is one of the 98 women fish processors trained in soap making. She currently produces 50 liters of liquid soap a week, which she sells to members of her community and the handwashing stations at fish landing sites. She earns a profit of about GHS 150 (approximately US\$ 26) after selling 50 liters of the liquid soap.

Excited about the new opportunity, Florence remarked, “To have another income source to help provide for my children is an opportunity that makes the financial burden on me lighter.”

The SFMP is also working with women fish processors to explore the possibility of using their fish processing facilities and the “Ahotor” smoking oven to process other food products to generate supplementary income. Products being tested include wheat flour pastries and local delicacies made with maize and local potatoes.

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## USAID Supports COVID-19 Safety Practices in Coastal Communities

**“The COVID-19 educational materials provided to us are easy to understand by fisherfolk. We are grateful to USAID for the handwashing station. With the education we continue to receive and the provision of the handwashing station, we are positive that we can help protect ourselves from COVID-19.”**

*Nii Gogo Obonantey  
Chief Fisherman, La fish landing site*



Fisherman at La Fish landing site reading a poster on how to care for reusable face masks.

**“Given the communal nature of landing and processing fish at canoe fishing beaches, it was anticipated that the artisanal fisheries sector would be greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The SFMP’s communications strategy has had a positive influence in the prevention of infection and spread of COVID-19.”**

*Dr. Raymond Babanawo, Chief of Party,  
USAID Ghana SFMP*

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Ghana in March 2020 and given the communal nature of fish landing and processing activities, this could have dire consequences on the artisanal fisheries sector. The artisanal canoe sector is central to the economy and livelihoods of about 300,000 men and women in over 300 coastal communities along Ghana’s coastline. Against this backdrop, the USAID Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP) initiated a COVID-19 response for the artisanal fisheries sector. Central to the COVID-19 response is a Social and Behavior Change Communication strategy that seeks to influence fisherfolk’s perceived susceptibility, severity, and threat to COVID-19, address barriers to behavior change, provide cues to action, and provide an enabling environment for behavior change.

Specifically, the project developed a number of information, education and communication materials including 10,000 posters, 18 animations and jingles, as well as a campaign song and video by one of Ghana’s leading pop stars, Kofi Kinaata. These materials touched on general information on COVID-19, symptoms, mode of transmission of the virus, safety practices like handwashing, wearing of face masks, and social distancing. The messaging was purposely designed for clear understanding by fishers. The posters, animations and jingles were produced in five widely spoken local coastal languages (Ewe, Dangbe, Fante, Ga, and Nzema) and distributed widely along the coast through various media channels.

The posters were distributed across 248 fish landing sites and processing centers in the four coastal regions (Greater Accra, Volta, Western, and Central). The jingles are being aired on 13 widely listened to radio stations across these regions as well as through community information centers and public address systems at canoe landing beaches. The 18 animations are being aired on Ghana Television and United Television, which are among the most watched TV stations by fisherfolk. The campaign song by Kofi Kinaata receives airplay on radio stations across the country, with the music video enjoying airplay on television stations as well. As at December 10, 2020, the music video had over 300,000 views on YouTube.

To provide an enabling environment for COVID-19 safe practices that fisherfolk have been educated on, the project distributed handwashing stations to 248 fish landing sites across 27 coastal districts. 248 volunteer advocates at each of these sites were trained to help manage these handwashing stations and provide cues to action on the safety protocols to local residents. The project supplies water, soap, and paper towels to these handwashing stations as a lack of supplies was seen as a challenge in the use of previously distributed handwashing stations based on initial site assessments made.

Also, the SFMP has rolled out a coast wide competition among landing beaches that show best adherence to COVID-19 safety practices to help motivate fisherfolk to practice the safety protocols. Additionally, the SFMP has set up an extensive WhatsApp communications platform of trusted sources of information in fishing communities - government representatives, fisherfolk association leaders, and local NGOs - to aid in the dissemination of COVID-19 educational materials and provide a platform for feedback and real time conversation among fisherfolk.

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## USAID Supports 2,000 Poor Fisheries Dependent Households with Cash Transfers

**“As the breadwinner of my household, it is gratifying that through this cash assistance I have been able to provide basic food needs for my family in spite of the difficulties and challenges imposed by COVID-19.”**

Mary Ocquaye, Fish Processor



Mary Ocquaye beaming with smiles after receiving her cash transfer via Mobile Money

**“This pilot intervention has been successful and any replication of this scheme would go a long way to help the fisheries sector and also complement the work of the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) and contribute to reducing poverty in Ghana. Beneficiaries who are also on the LEAP database should be enrolled on the governments Complimentary Livelihood Assets Support Scheme in order to graduate them from the LEAP program.”**

*Mr. Felix Logah, Head of Programs  
Coordinating Unit, MOGCSP*

**Ghana’s fisheries sector accounts** for the livelihoods of an estimated 10% of the population. The key stocks of the small pelagic fish popularly termed “the people’s fish” on which the marine artisanal sector depends, have experienced a steady decline in catch as a result of excessive fishing pressure and unsustainable fishing practices. This has dire consequences for about 100,000 fishermen and 30,000 fish processors and traders who depend directly on these fish stocks for their sustenance. With the onset of COVID-19 in Ghana, it was anticipated that the disruption of fishing activities as a result of safety measures instituted by government, such as lockdowns and social distancing to curb infection and spread of the virus, could further worsen the plight of poor and vulnerable fisheries dependent households who are already struggling as a result of the decline in landings of the people’s fish.

Cognizant of the challenges confronting vulnerable fisheries dependent households, the USAID Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP) initiated a pilot economic safety net scheme targeting approximately 2,000 poor and vulnerable fisheries dependent households. An unconditional cash transfer was provided to selected beneficiaries to make it possible for these households to meet basic food needs. To ensure transparency and fairness in selection of beneficiary households, the Ghana Canoe Fishermen’s Council and several fish processor associations, National Fish Processors and Traders Association, Central and Western Fishmongers Association and Development Action Association, were tasked by the project to develop their own selection criteria. The criteria were subsequently vetted and approved by an ad hoc technical committee set up to guide the process. The criteria were then used by local community representatives of the associations to identify and select potential beneficiaries. The SFMP provided cash transfers to selected households through mobile money accounts. The value of the economic safety net assistance was GHS 297 (approximately USD 52) per month for a period of four months.

Mary Ocquaye, a 45-year old fish processor at Elmina in the Central Region who has been struggling in recent years to find fish to process and provides for her two children was one of the beneficiaries. She had this to say about the SFMP Cash Transfer, “As the breadwinner for my household, it is gratifying that through this assistance I have been able to put food on the table for my family in spite of the difficulties and challenges imposed by the COVID-19.”

Mr. Felix Logah, Head of Program Coordinating Unit at the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection and a member of the ad hoc technical committee recommended the replication of the scheme. This pilot scheme demonstrated the feasibility of a social safety net that effectively targets poor and vulnerable fishing households. It also could be used during closed fishing seasons to help these households cope with loss of fishing income when such management interventions are instituted to help fish stocks recover.

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## Chief Fisherman Becomes A COVID-19 Agent Of Change

**“I now know that salt water does not make us immune. I know and practice all the safety protocols. I have become a change agent as I also educate other fishers to stay safe.”**

*Togbui Vumegbe, Chief Fisherman,  
Kedzikope, Volta Region*



A fish processor washing her hands at a handwashing station provided at the Elmina Old Marine landing site.

**“The communications campaign improved general hygiene knowledge, practices and behavior at fish landing beaches, including personal hygiene, hygienic fish handling due to frequent handwashing, and increased availability of handwashing stations at the fish landing and processing sites”**

*Josephine Opare, Project Officer,  
CEWEFIA.*

**“I first heard of the coronavirus disease when Ghana recorded its first case in March 2020.** We started hearing information and messages on radio and TV on the disease.” Said Togbui Vumegbe, Chief Fisherman, Kedzikope in the Volta region. After Ghana recorded its first cases of COVID-19, the Government of Ghana started a series of information and education campaigns to inform and educate citizens on various aspects of the pandemic, including; symptoms, modes of infection and transmission. The US Government supported the Government of Ghana’s efforts to mitigate infection and spread of the disease. Through the USAID Sustainable Fisheries Management Project, a COVID-19 response was started and geared towards social and behavior change specifically among fisherfolk. Due to the communal nature of landing and processing fish, fisherfolks are considered at high risk for contracting the virus.

In complementing the Government of Ghana’s efforts, the SFMP supported the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development and its Fisheries Commission to roll out messaging targeted at influencing positive behavior amongst fisherfolk for adherence to the COVID-19 safety protocols.

“Even though we had heard of how fatal the disease could be, at first, I didn’t think fishers were at risk because of our constant contact with salty sea water.” Togbui Vumegbe added.

Considering fisherfolk misconceptions about the virus, the social and behavior change initiative targeted messages and communications to educate fisherfolk that everyone is at risk, and that seawater does not provide immunity from the virus. Fisherfolk were educated on the mode of infection, signs and symptoms, and on the Ghana Health Service approved safety practices.

“In September, I began hearing COVID-19 jingles and a campaign song airing daily on the public address systems at the landing beach and on radio. I saw posters at the landing beach and animations on TV. What I noticed this time around was that the messages were simple and directed specifically at fishers. It showed our activities, people who looked like us and, more importantly, the messages were in our local languages. All the confused explanations we used to hear about the disease were made simple for us to understand.” Togbui Vumegbe continued.

Speaking about the social and behavior change communication campaign, Perfectual Labik, the Communications Specialist for the project said, “The strength of the campaign can be attributed to effective engagement of fisherfolk in developing messages specifically related to fishers.”

“The campaign has also improved general hygiene, knowledge, practices, and behavior at the landing beaches, including personal hygiene, hygienic fish handling due to frequent handwashing, and availability of handwashing stations at the fish landing and processing sites.” observed Josephine Opare, a Project Officer at the Central and Western Region Fishmongers Improvement Association, one of the Project’s implementing partners.

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## Fostering Sustainable Behavior Change Through Competitions

**“We were able to mobilize ourselves to make sure everyone at the landing site wore their face mask, regularly washed their hands and maintained a 6 foot social distance when we heard that there were prizes to be won. When someone for example, forgot to wear his or her mask, another person will prompt him or her to do so. We owned responsibly for our safety.”**

Nana Kuedza, Chief Fisherman,  
Sowlo Landing Beach



FC Zonal officer of Nzema East Municipal Assembly presenting the best landing site plaque to the chief fisherman of Sowlo landing site for winning the November competition.

**“During monitoring visits, we did not only pay attention to how fisherfolk adhered to the safety protocols, but also, how they mobilized themselves to protect each other, with a high sense of shared responsibility. We also took note of how clean the sites and beaches were kept. I hope such competitions can be employed in addressing other fisheries related issues and challenges where we are seeking behavior change.”**

*Justice Mensah, Hen Mpoano*

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Ghana in March 2020, the USAID Sustainable Fisheries Management Project implemented a **social and behavior change communication strategy to influence positive behaviors of fisherfolk** towards adherence to the Ghana Health Service approved COVID-19 safety protocols. Integral to any social and behavior change communication strategy and community-based health and safety system designed to facilitate sustained behavior change are the concepts of community cohesion, shared ownership, and participation.

As part of the communications strategy, the project integrated a competition and awards scheme across the four coastal regions of Ghana for the fish landing sites best adhering to COVID-safe practices. The competition, called the “COVID-19 Safety Landing Sites Competition,” sought to reward landing sites that best adhered to COVID-19 safety practices, particularly frequent handwashing, face mask wearing, and social distancing at fish landing sites. The competition encouraged the practice of approved safety protocols, and also created influential peer pressure amongst fisherfolk. This encouraged shared responsibility for effective community-based health and safety management, and also allowed for learning and knowledge sharing through phone based social media platforms. COVID-safe practices were further promoted by the installation of handwashing facilities across 242 fish landing sites along the coast.

The competition, which ran for three months, was held on a district-by-district basis. The 242 landing sites in 26 districts in the 4 coastal regions participated. Real time data was gathered by the project through phone polling of community volunteers on the level of adherence to COVID-safe practices. These “Site Advocates” were also trained and provided a small stipend to manage the handwashing stations and ensure a supply of soap and water. Every month, data obtained through phone polling was validated by visits of project staff and representatives of the Competition Committee, including the Fisheries Commission.

Highlighting how the “COVID-19 Safety Landing Sites Competition” influenced the Landing Beach Committees to mobilize fisherfolks, Nana Kuedza, the Chief Fisherman of Sowlo in the Nzema East District of the Western Region said, “We were able to mobilize ourselves to make sure everyone at the landing site wore their face mask, regularly washed their hands, and maintained a 6 foot social distance when we heard that there were prizes to be won. When someone for example, forgot to wear his or her mask, another person will prompt him or her to do so. We owned responsibility for our safety.”

Winning sites for each month were presented with plaques to show their achievements and provided with plastic chairs for community meetings held at the landing sites. At the end of the 3 months, 73 landing sites out of the 242 participating sites in 26 coastal districts were awarded plaques and prizes.

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