



# VSLA DELIVERS A BETTER FUTURE FOR FISHING COMMUNITIES

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*Anthony Eshi, a farmer at Ajomoro Eshiem, Western Region*

*: Photo Credit: Abdul Mumin, SFMP*

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*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.