

## The smoke lingers on

**A grateful grandson recollects the special skills of a grand old fish processor in Ghana**

**T**he mid-1960s and early 1970s seem to be fading away fast, especially if one recollects experiences and the oral history of that period. It is against this background that this article is being written to highlight memories of fish processing in my childhood. Much reference will be made to my grandmother as she was the one I stayed with and from whom I learnt much of the processing techniques.

The period under consideration (1963-1973) saw the beginning of the destruction of the Keta township in Ghana, as a result of the construction of the Tema harbour. Keta used to be the hub of all fishing and fishing-related activities in the south-eastern part of Ghana. Its market was so popular that traders from Togo, Benin and Nigeria patronized it constantly until the sea flooded the road leading to it. One can not talk about fishing in Ghana without mentioning this town.

What is left of it today is a thin stretch of land between the sea and the lagoon, believed to be the largest in West Africa. Behind this lagoon is situated Agbozume, where my grandmother was born and had practiced her vocation. It will be misleading to say that Agbozume was a fishing village. The lagoon, the sea, the coconut plantations and nature's woodlands provided a rich economic diversity to this village.

Fish processing was a major economic activity of the women of the village at the time. During lean seasons, oil and cake processed from coconut (for animal feed), and mat weaving were the vocations of the women. Most of the fishmongers of this village carried fuel wood to the beaches to smoke the fish. Others with low capitals exchanged wood for fish that they

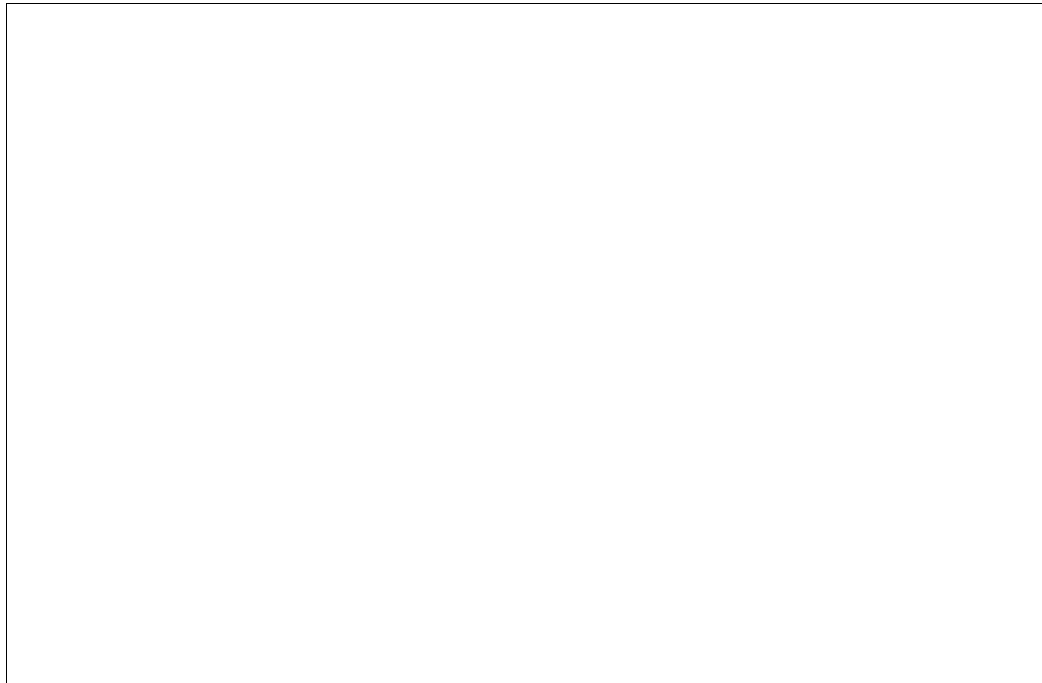
normally sent back for processing. Logoshie, my grandma, as her peers called her, rose up as a vendor of her mother's fish products to become a processor/wholesaler. A mother of seven, she managed to combine her household and social obligations to run this business until she died at the age of 78.

Fish smoking and fermentation were her specialty. These two traditional processing technologies were very important as involve only minor economic losses and maximizes the use of the resource. Very fresh fish was smoked and those that could not be smoked quickly were either dried or fermented. Smoked-fish buyers will first taste the product before purchasing, so it was in the interest of processors to use quality fresh fish.

Grandma had several fish-smoking points in almost all the fish-landing villages in the Keta district. She hired people to help when there was a bumper harvest; otherwise, the main tasks were performed by my mother and her sister. The fresh fish was purchased from fishermen who had family links with her. This relationship was important, as sometimes their fishing trips were sponsored by her. She also collected the fish and made payment after sales, especially during major seasons. The main species she processed were sardinella and anchovy.

### Great skills

The fish was first washed in fresh water and laid out on coconut palms to remove some of its liquid content, after which it was smoked. Great skill was needed in smoking, since the liquid level in the fish before smoking, could determine the taste, while the different types of wood used for smoking imparted different tastes. For instance, the use of sugar cane



for smoking led to a very well finished end product.

**T**he round traditional oven was the order of the day. Grandma smoked between 100 and 400 basins a week, depending on the season. Unless there was a glut, Grandma never sold her products on the beach, but would send them home for a second smoking. If the product could not be sold, periodic smoking was done to keep insects away.

Fermentation was done with bigger fishes, vava being the first choice, as it was an important flavouring ingredient for the Ewes in Ghana, Togo and Benin. Grandma had a unique way of fermenting her product. The fish was kept in a salt solution for three days and then sun-dried for two or three days. She then wrapped the fish in brown paper and buried it in the sand. The top of the sand was covered with thatch to prevent rain water from seeping down. This product was kept this way until the market recovered.

The chunk of Gandma's products were sold by her daughters—my mum sold the smoked fish, while my aunt handled the fermented product. My mum traveled from Dakpa, a village close to the Ghana-Togo border, where she lived and sold the wares. Denu and Dzodze markets were important for my aunt, as these places were patronized by traders from Togo and Benin. During lean seasons,

Grandma also sold some of the products to customers who came directly to the village to buy.

I found myself in this village at the early age of eight, as a result of the loss of my father. My mother could not cope with the economic consequences, as she was then weaning her third boy. So I was posted to join two other cousins living with Grandma at the village.

Social and economic responsibilities were organized along gender and age lines in all households. By the rules, as a growing boy, I was not expected to take part in many home chores, including fish smoking. Fortunately or unfortunately, my two cousins were much younger than I, so I virtually became solely responsible for all chores. One of them was to take care of the processed fish in Grandma's storage room. This involved stacking the fish into the smokers and heating them up from time to time. It was a painful task at the time, as I had little time to play with my peers.

**Displeasure**

Additionally, I had to vend some of the fish, if grandma needed money or realized that a portion was going bad. The sale was done in the village, to my displeasure, as my peers gave me all kinds of names and laughed at me — vending was, and remains, a female's job, irrespective of age. However, I got a satisfying thrill by

stealing some fish and sharing it with friends at school. This was done to spite those who called me to order during vending.

**A**lthough Grandma was illiterate and therefore organized her business empirically, she was very successful in making the venture grow. She had plenty of financial management skills and generally earned a lot to cover her fixed and variable costs. I never saw her broke. The walls of her storage room were the basis of her bookkeeping. A particular symbol stood for a customer and she could tell how much each one owed her by counting the strokes on the wall.

Before her death, Grandma managed to change her traditional mud house into a structure of sandcrete blocks. With that, the seasonal renovation of our thatch roof became a thing of the past. Unfortunately, it was a piece of the iron sheet used in the roofing that saw her untimely death. The piece was left in the sand by the artisans and she got pricked by it. The village fetish priest tried out certain sacrifices to save her, but the tetanus got her in the end.

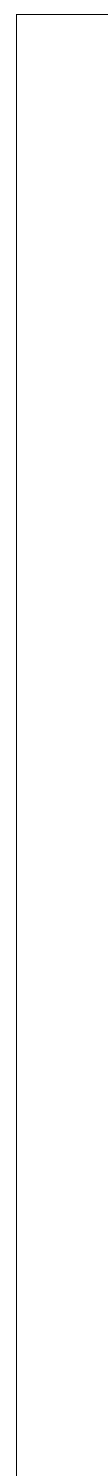
Today, I have realized that Grandma's success story was a result of the fish species she utilized, the quality of processing, her perfect control of fresh-fish supplies, her access to markets and the technologies she applied.

In those days, entertainment was a family affair, with the impartation of knowledge through oral history topping the list. After the evening meals, we, the grandchildren, would gather around Grandma for her stories. That was how I learnt a lot about the fishery. Unfortunately, she is not alive or I would have loved to pose her some questions now. Among them would have been how she got her capital and the seasonal variations of her activities.

Although Grandma is gone, the 'smoke' lingers on as, in my work with TESCO, I try to improve the oven she used and introduced me to.

This piece is by David Eli, who works with Technical Services for Community Development (TESCOD), Accra, Ghana

First person



# No Child's Play

Are current interventions far-reaching enough to tackle trafficking of child labour in Ghana's fishery?

**W**orldwide, the figures on child labour are worrying. According to estimates from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), there are about 215 mn 'child workers', many of whom work full-time, and close to 170 mn are 'trapped' in activities considered as child labour. Typically, these children are denied education, proper nutrition, recreation and other basic rights.

More often than not, the cold statistics on child labour are glossed over since they do not reveal the misery and helplessness of children. A recent child protection baseline

protect children. But despite modest gains in rescuing and rehabilitating victims of child labour and trafficking (CLaT), the problem is still widespread.

The latest response to tackling the CLaT menace is a US\$24-mn USAID-funded Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP). While the SFMP has a broader objective of contributing to food security through Ghana's fishery, it also has a key anti-CLaT component backed by an elaborate, multisectoral action plan. This is a welcome addition to the myriads of CLaT initiatives, many of which are not yielding the desired results.

Arguably, the success of the SFMP will depend, to a greater extent, how it addresses fundamental shortcomings in previous interventions on CLaT.

The number of children engaged in child labour and trafficking in Ghana is estimated to be 1.9 mn, representing 21.8 per cent of children aged between five and 17 years. The range of activities vary but the common forms include fishing, stone quarrying, cattle herding, domestic servitude as well as commercial sex exploitation, mining, portering and commercial agriculture.

## Young victims

In fisheries, child labour and trafficking occurs across the entire value chain, from downstream to upstream activities. Some victims as young as five are compelled to paddle or toss water out of canoes, and dive into deep waters to track fish movements or disentangle fishing nets from tree stumps. Others are involved in picking, sorting and cleaning fish for processing or marketing and distribution. Traditionally, young

**Many victims are daily exposed to hazards, hunger, exhaustion, neglect, verbal and physical abuse by caregivers and employers...**

report shows that child labour continues to thrive in all regions of Ghana in spite of interventions by government and non-government organizations (NGOs). The report, published by the Gender, Children and Social Protection Ministry, also stated: "Many victims are daily exposed to hazards, hunger, exhaustion, neglect, verbal and physical abuse by caregivers and employers".

In theory, Ghana is committed to fighting child labour and trafficking. The country touts its track record as being the first to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the first to enact a host of legislative instruments to

This article is by **Peter Linford Adjei** ([pieroquz@gmail.com](mailto:pieroquz@gmail.com)), Field Researcher, Technical Services for Community Development (TESCOD), Accra, Ghana

boys have been the preferred choice of child traffickers; but the demand for girls is believed to be on the increase.

In one study by the International Justice Mission in 2015, it was established that among female child traffickers, younger girls were preferred over older girls—the main reason being the fear that older girls will become pregnant or ‘husband snatchers’. And in cases where boys are ‘understaffed’, girls work equally as boys. Nevertheless, most CLaT victims, regardless of gender and age, perform physically demanding tasks, and work for long hours with little rest, under hazardous conditions.

While the number of CLaT victims in the fisher is given as 2.3 per cent of the estimated 1.4 mn children in Ghana trapped in child labour, CLaT in fishery is empirically proven to be among the worst forms of child labour (WFCL) in Ghana. The WFCL, also known as Convention 182 according to the ILO, in simple terms “include work that is likely to jeopardize the health, safety or morals of children.”

Ghana is a signatory to several international conventions that establish standards to protect children. Some of these conventions include the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the ILO’s Minimum Age Convention (C138) and Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (C182) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). Other notable instruments relating to child protection are highlighted below:

#### **The Children’s Act, 1998 (ACT 560) and Juvenile Justice Act, 2003 (ACT 653)**

The Children’s Act (1998) and Juvenile Justice Act (2003) reflect fundamental constitutional provisions and establish the foundation for national child-protection systems, and govern children’s access to justice with specific provisions. For example, Article 87 of the Children Act specifies that: “(1) No person shall engage a child in exploitative labour” and “(2) Labour is exploitative of a child if it deprives the child of its health, education or development”. These

two provisions harmonize with the provisions of the ILO Conventions No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour and No. 138 on the Minimum Age, respectively. Regarding work, the Children’s Act establishes 13 years for light work, 15 years for engagement in non-hazardous work, and 18 years for full employment.

#### **The Human Trafficking Act, 2005 (ACT 694)**

The Human Trafficking Act of 2005 (ACT 694) was promulgated as an “Act for the prevention, reduction and punishment of human trafficking, for the rehabilitation and reintegration of trafficked persons and for related matters”. The Act defines trafficking as “recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, trading or receipt of persons within and across national borders by (a) use of threats, force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, (b) giving or receiving payments and benefits to achieve consent”.

#### **The Domestic Violence Act, 2006 (ACT 732)**

The Domestic Violence Act, 2006 (ACT 732) was enacted as a direct response to tackle domestic violence of all forms. The Act primarily seeks to provide opportunities for addressing violence in the home and family setting. It also defines in clear terms

JEAN RIVEL-FONDJO



Landing of the catch, Prampram, Ghana and in fisheries, child labour and trafficking occurs across the entire value chain, from downstream to upstream activities

the range of violence to encompass: assault (of marriages and within families), deprivation (of food, clothing, health, education, shelter, etc.) and abuse (physical, emotional and financial). The broad scope of the Act makes it practical for the protection of the vulnerable, of which women and children are the major victims of violence and abuse.

### Despite many interventions, greater political will is needed to eliminate CLaT

In addition to these major legislative instruments, there are also other state-sponsored institutional structures and interventions aimed at addressing CLaT. These include:

- Child Labour Unit of the Ministry of Employment & Labour Relations (responsible for the National Child Labour Elimination Programme);
- National Steering Committee on Child Labour (the overall co-ordinating body for child labour elimination programmes in Ghana);
- Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (fCUBE), School Feeding Programme, and the Capitation Grant to encourage schooling and increase retention.

Despite many interventions, greater political will is needed to eliminate CLaT. The general consensus by civil society is that current efforts at combating CLaT are not enough to constrain the practice. The US Department of State shared a similar perspective in its 2015 and 2016 human trafficking report, which placed Ghana on a Tier 2 Watch List. It stated: “The Government of Ghana does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so.”

The worst form of child labour in Ghana’s fishery is flourishing mainly because of a combination of high levels of poverty, limited livelihood opportunities, lack of awareness of victims’ hazardous working

conditions, and weak enforcement of applicable laws.

### The Sustainable Fishery Management Project (SFMP)

In spite of the lack of significant progress in preventing CLaT and punishing perpetrators, there are those who remain optimistic that it can be eliminated. Various governmental ministries and agencies, as well as a host of NGOs, are instituting and implementing strategies to combat CLaT.

In the year 2009, USAID initiated the Integrated Coastal and Fisheries Governance Initiative project (ICFG) with local partners in Ghana. The central objective of the programme, according to USAID, was to “assemble the necessary pre-conditions for a fresh approach to a formally constituted coastal and fisheries governance programme that could serve as a model for Ghana.” Upon completion of the ICFG in 2014, the Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP) was rolled out.

The SFMP, which will end in 2019, has this objective: “to rebuild Ghana’s marine fisheries stocks and catches through facilitating adoption of responsible fishing practices.” Whereas the previous ICFG focused primarily on fishery governance, the SFMP has a wider scope, as reflected in its goals, listed below:

- Improve the legal enabling conditions for effective collaborative management of marine resources, use rights and effort-reduction strategies;
- Increase the use of science and applied research to inform decisionmaking and to strengthen enforcement;
- Heighten public awareness of fisheries issues to build the public and political support needed to rebuild fish stocks; and
- Implement applied management initiatives for several targeted fisheries ecosystems.

Just like the preceding ICFG project, the SFMP’s lead implementing partner is the Coastal Resource Centre of the University of Rhode Island (CRC-URI). The CRC-URI is working

with a consortium of organizations, including Friends of the Nation (FoN), Hen Mpoano, the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV), SSG Advisors, the Central & Western Fishmongers Improvement Association (CEWEFIA), Daasgift Quality Foundation (DQF), Development Action Association (DAA) and Spatial Solutions.

The CLaT component under the SFMP seeks to “adopt deliberate steps towards reducing child labour and trafficking in the Central Region of Ghana.” Accordingly, it held a stakeholders’ CLaT meeting in February 2016 with its main partners and other stakeholders from District Assemblies, the Department of Social Welfare, Central Regional Traditional Council, media, civil society organizations (CSOs), community leaders, the Fisheries Commission, Ghana immigration officers, police officers, and focal persons identified during the SFMP’s initial CLaT survey.

According to the SFMP, the stakeholders’ meeting resulted in adoption of a three-pronged approach to address CLaT as follows:


1. Recognize the need for extensive communication, education and sensitization of the relevant stakeholders, including communities and vulnerable households to make the practices socially unacceptable;
2. Identify and work with key actors to address the underlying causes of CLaT among the vulnerable households. Proposed actions included livelihood support, improved access to development services (health, education, economic opportunities, etc.); and
3. Engage the security agencies for extensive enforcement and deterrence actions through on-the-ground investigations to identify the key perpetrators of the CLaT practice, and effect their arrest and prosecution.

Will this three-pronged approach really make any difference in addressing the vexing issues in CLaT? The Project proponents strongly believe so.

Victoria Koomson, the Executive Director of CEWEFIA, one of the implementing partners of the SFMP, in an interview, outlined a number of successes. Among them are: community sensitisation meetings (CSMs) in Ekumfi-Narkwa, Eku-Mpoano, Ekumfi-Otuam, Ekumfi-Immuna, Gomoa-Dago, Mumford, Abandze, Anomabo and Biriwa; formation of community child protection committees (CCPCs) and anti-CLaT advocates in Elmina and Moree; business model training for 76 participants from women groups; and hygienic fish handling training workshops for 42 women fish processors and 12 fishermen in Moree and 33 fishmongers and 18 fishermen in Anlo Beach in the Shama District.

FoN another SFMP implementing partner, also reports of similar success in contributing to behaviour changes to make CLaT socially unacceptable. Through radio programmes on CLaT at Ahomka FM and Radio Peace, FoN has created the platform to inform, sensitise and educate coastal communities in the Central and Western Regions where CLaT is particularly prevalent. In addition, SNV engaged a lead Ghanaian actor, Adjetej Annan, as an anti-CLaT ambassador to promote edutainment on anti-CLaT.

Clearly, the implementation of the SFMP has gathered momentum and there is the need to sustain the gains it has made so far. The use of an integrated approach, such as involvement of traditional authorities, law enforcement agencies and extensive actors in the fishery, makes it a potent force to reduce CLaT, but eliminating CLaT will require much more political will.

However noble as the SFMP goals may be, greater political will is needed to adequately resource dedicated anti-CLaT agencies to train law enforcers and child welfare workers, as well as investigate, prosecute and convict all child traffickers. Many doubt this can be achieved within a short time. 

#### For more



<http://fonghana.org/child-labor-and-trafficking-clat/>

#### **Child Labour and Trafficking (CLaT)**

<http://www.ilo.org/ipecc/Regionsandcountries/Africa/Ghana/lang--en/index.htm>

#### **Ghana (IPEC)—ILO**

<http://www.ilo.org/ipeccinfo/product/download.do?type=document&id=28375>

#### **Child Labour in the Fish Supply Chain on Lake Volta, Ghana: The Torkor Model**

<http://www.fao.org/docrep/018/i3318e/i3318e.pdf>

#### **Guidance on Addressing Child Labour in Fisheries and Aquaculture**

[http://www.fao-ilo.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/fao\\_ilo/pdf/WorkshopFisheries2010/WFPapers/DAfenyaduChildLabourGhana.pdf](http://www.fao-ilo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/fao_ilo/pdf/WorkshopFisheries2010/WFPapers/DAfenyaduChildLabourGhana.pdf)

#### **Child Labour in Fisheries and Aquaculture, A Ghanaian Perspective**

[http://www.fao-ilo.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/fao\\_ilo/pdf/WorkshopFisheries2010/WFPapers/MathewICSFChildLabourFisheriesFinalNote.pdf](http://www.fao-ilo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/fao_ilo/pdf/WorkshopFisheries2010/WFPapers/MathewICSFChildLabourFisheriesFinalNote.pdf)

#### **Children’s Work and Child Labour in Fisheries: A Note on Principles and Criteria for Employing Children and Policies and Action for Progressively Eliminating the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Fisheries and Aquaculture**

<https://www.icsf.net/en/monographs/article/EN/39-the-state-of-wo.html?start=20>

#### **The State of World Fisheries from a Fishworker Perspective: The Ghanaian Situation**



# Small Fish, Big Solution

Access to affordable small fish is key to achieving zero hunger and improved nutrition in Ghana's poor urban households, a new study shows

Small fish are indeed the backbone of Ghana's animal protein supply in the poor urban neighbourhoods of Accra (such as Nima, Chorkor, Ga Mashie and James Town) and Tamale (such as Sagnarigu, Kukoo, Sakasaka and Salamba). This is the conclusion of a recent research project called Fish4Food. The academic team behind the project drew from the University of Amsterdam (UoA), the University of Ghana (UoG) and the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST). Until recently, this critical aspect was largely overlooked. The research findings demonstrate that despite the high appeal of large-sized fish—not to mention the increasingly popular farmed fish like tilapia and catfish—the urban poor prefer smaller pelagics like anchovies, herrings and mackerels.

Fish size and nutritional value aside, fish is inseparable from Ghanaian cuisine. Nearly a third of the average urban household income spent on food goes into fish. With such a big appetite for fish, it is of little wonder that Ghanaians consume an estimated 25 kg of fish per capita per year; this is higher than Africa's average of 10.5 kg and the global average of 20.3 kg. Beyond the raw figures, the study provides a larger picture of fish for food and what the high consumption of fish means to the already declining fisheries and, more crucially, for its capacity to feed the urban poor.

Even before the advent of modern science, indigenous communities in Ghana were nutrient-savvy. The expert cook knew the right type of fish and ingredients to combine in the precise order and at the exact moment, not only for dietary value but also to capture the delicate elements of regional and ethnic taste. Staple food such as *akple*

with *abobi tadzi*, *etsew* with *Fante-Fante*, and *banku* with *shitorlo* are rich sources of protein and omega-3 fatty acids. For centuries, households have appreciated the health benefits of these staples and their recipes have hardly changed.

## Household size

It was from the analysis of survey data from 300 low-income households in Accra and Tamale that the Fish4Food

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project found that fish is relatively affordable and accounts for a big chunk of the food budget of poor urban households. Besides price, the researchers found that other factors like location, availability, taste, fish size and religion influence the type of fish consumed.

What makes a household spend more or less on fish? The study offers a number of insightful answers, including household income and household size. "The rich spend a smaller amount of their budget on fish while the poor allocate a larger share," says the study. As the poor get richer, the proportion of income they allocate to fish declines. An increase in income frees up part of the budget to be spent on other protein sources like beef, goat and chicken.

The study shows the influence of household size: "An increase in household size leads to a decreasing probability of the household allocating income to fish consumption. A household with larger size needs

This article is by **Peter Linford Adjei** ([pieroquz@gmail.com](mailto:pieroquz@gmail.com)), Technical Services for Community Development (TESCOD), Accra, Ghana and Member, ICSF



more fish and, hence, it becomes more expensive to acquire large quantities of fish. Therefore, large-sized families spend less on fish and switch to cheaper alternatives such as imported chicken and eggs.”

Regardless of how household income and size influence the purchasing decision, fish consumption is not likely to decrease any time soon. And as the population expands, demand for fish is expected to rise. Naturally, the sustainability of the fishery resources becomes an increasingly pressing concern.

To satisfy an ever-increasing demand for fish, Ghana draws about 450,000 tonnes of fish from marine and inland waters, as also from fish farms. The country imports an additional 450,000 tonnes. An estimated 2.6 mn Ghanaians are dependent for their livelihood on fisheries and value chains related to them. Given the large number of actors and communities dependent on the fish value chain, the sector is pivotal to employment, poverty reduction and food security. The great demand for fish also puts tremendous pressure on the fishery resources. In

recent times, the landings have been declining; this is further aggravated by a growing annual fish deficit of about 50 per cent that is filled up largely through imports.

Any significant increase in the fish import bill bodes ill for low-income earners because a steep rise in price will put a strain on their ability to buy fish. Considering that fish provides up to about 60 per cent of the national average animal protein intake, any disturbance in the fragile food security mix—availability, stability, utilization and access—has serious repercussions on the nutritional health of the urban poor.

Successive governments have developed policies to address the challenges plaguing the fisheries sector. Much emphasis has been placed on legislations such as the Fisheries Law (Act 625) in 2002 and Fisheries Regulations in 2010. More recent efforts include the vessel monitoring system, marine patrols, fisher watchdog groups and closed seasons. Yet, despite modest achievements, the overall scorecard is not encouraging. Marine fish stocks continue to decline. Why?

PETER LINFORD ADJEI



Plastic waste at a landing site in Teshie, Ghana. Plastic fragments and chemical pollutants such as mercury and dichlorodiphenyl trichloroethane (DDT) can be ingested by fish and passed up the food chain to consumers.

The Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (MoFAD) identifies overfishing and overcapacity of fishing vessels as some of the obstacles to the recovery of the fish stocks. While fishers cannot be criminally charged for overfishing, there is ample evidence of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the sector, verging on criminal activities.

### Informal sector

While the fisheries infractions include the use of light, explosives and violations of mesh size, a more destructive form of IUU is trans-shipment of fish at sea. Called as *saiko* in the local parlance, trans-shipment of fish involves the sale or exchange of by-catch fish between trawling vessels and artisanal fishers or collectors at sea, for money or goods. Just how much *saiko* is affecting the local fisheries is yet to be ascertained. But this much is certain: the use of brute force by trawling vessels is taking so much of juvenile fish from the sea that the fish are barely able to reproduce their numbers and grow to maturity.

In addition to the problems of *saiko* is pollution, particularly from plastics. Plastic fragments and chemical pollutants such as mercury and dichlorodiphenyl trichloroethane (DDT) can be ingested by fish and passed up the food chain to consumers. The serious concerns expressed by stakeholders and the renewed attention by MoFAD to sanitize the fishing sector are very important since the security of fishers' livelihood and Ghana's main animal protein supply is at stake.

Ghana has a working fish-value chain supported by a strong informal sector, networks of relationship and improved telecommunication infrastructure such as the mobile phone and mobile phone banking. Among its recommendations, the Fish4Food study advocates the enhancement of the value chains of small pelagic fish, through improvement in packaging, storage and transportation. If adopted, the researchers are convinced this will make fish safer, fresher and more affordable for low-income households, contributing significantly towards achieving SDG2: ending hunger and malnutrition.



PETER LINFORD ADJEI

A fishmonger preparing fish for processing. An estimated 2.6 mn Ghanaians are dependent for their livelihood on fisheries and value chains related to them, and the sector is pivotal to poverty reduction and food security.

Nevertheless, without consultations to promote free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of small-scale fishworkers and industry and the regulatory bodies, achieving zero hunger will remain elusive, as evidenced by previous ineffective attempts. In this respect, the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) provide a framework to address the inherent challenges of artisanal fisheries in a more organized, all-inclusive and dignified manner, guided by such principles as human rights and dignity, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability. The real strength of the SSF Guidelines, however, lies not in merely mapping out obstacles but also guiding amendments and/or inspiring new or supplementary legislative and regulatory provisions. 3

#### For more

<https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/88535/101263/F583967126/GHA88535.pdf>

#### Ghana Fisheries Act, 2002 (Act 625)

<https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/11/10/2807/htm>

#### Assessment of Household Food Security in Fish Farming Communities in Ghana

<https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/12/19/7932/pdf>

#### Fish Consumption Behaviour and Perception of Food Security of Low-Income Households in Urban Areas of Ghana

# Rich Rewards of Doing it Right

**The implementation of the SSF Guidelines should be based on human-rights principles and standards, factoring in local conditions**

In June 2014, the 31st session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) endorsed the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines). The SSF Guidelines are rooted in decades of pioneering work in small-scale fisheries by intrepid human-rights campaigners such as John Kurien and Chandrika Sharma, among other advocates.

The International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) has spearheaded campaigns since 2014 that show how the SSF Guidelines provide an unprecedented framework for addressing the needs of small-scale fishers through the human-rights-based approach. The initial phase of the implementation of the SSF Guidelines in Ghana was thus not unique to the country but part of ICSF's broader global campaign in 2018-2019 in Brazil, India, Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, Indonesia, Philippines and Sri Lanka.

While its guiding principles are based on international human-rights standards, standards of responsible fisheries and on sustainable development, a number of contextual factors must be considered before local implementation. In Ghana, these considerations included socio-cultural, economic and educational factors, in addition to SSF value chains, bottlenecks and interventions. These broad conditions determined the local content of Ghana's programme, its focus and outcomes vis-a-vis the SSF Guidelines.

Small-scale fisheries play a critical role in providing food security and

supporting livelihoods in Ghana. It is estimated that the sector contributes 60 per cent of the total animal protein intake of Ghanaians while providing a source of livelihood for three million fishworkers dependent on the SSF value chains. For nutritional and socio-cultural factors, fish is highly valued. Ghanaians are among the highest consumers of fish in the world: 20-25 kg per capita per annum.

The country draws about 450,000 tonnes of fish annually from marine and inland waters, as well as from

**...the sector contributes 60 per cent of the total animal protein intake of Ghanaians while providing a source of livelihood for three million fishworkers...**

aquaculture. An additional 450,000 tonnes is imported. In terms of volume, SSF contribute 70-80 per cent of the total catch from marine and inland waters. The high number of fishers and communities dependent on SSF makes the sector pivotal to employment, livelihood and also to the food security mix.

Since the mid-1990s, Ghana's SSF economy was once thriving but has been declining since the mid-1990s. The Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (MoFAD) points out that overfishing, overexploitation and overcapacity of fishing vessels are the main obstacles to recovery of stocks. Small-scale fishers, on the other hand, point to weak regulation and enforcement of bye-laws as the fundamental problem. Despite state

*This article is by Peter Linford Adjei (pieroquz@gmail.com) of Technical Services for Community Development (TESCOD), Accra, Ghana, and Member, ICSF*



TESCOD



The two-day national workshop was held on August 14-15, 2019, at the University of Ghana. Participants and delegates were drawn from the NAFPTA, the Prampram Cooperative Fishmongers Society, NICFC, GNCFC, CEWEFIA and the University of Ghana, among others

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policy interventions and multilateral donor support, Ghanaian fisheries are hurtling towards unprecedented crises. To reverse this trend, fishworkers must be empowered to participate in decision making and management of the fishery resource to make the sector more productive and sustainable. Central to this is a shift from the macro level, top-bottom policy approach to a clear-cut human-rights-based approach.

Accordingly, in 2013, representatives from the NGO, Technical Services for Community Development (TESCOD) contributed to discussions on a 'zero draft' of the SSF Guidelines in Grand Bassam, Cote d'Ivoire. The initial phase of the implementation of the guidelines in Ghana, therefore, provided a unique opportunity to engage with long-time SSF advocates to shape the discourse for local implementation.

The first phase of the SSF Guidelines implementation in Ghana focused on improving awareness of the guidelines at the community, national and institutional levels; identifying common SSF challenges that could be addressed within a national SSF Guidelines framework;

and deepening the understanding of the implementation challenges. To this end, the year-long programme was structured around four key activities:

- Translating the SSF Guidelines into four indigenous languages
- Conducting three local workshops
- Organizing a two-day national implementation workshop
- Creating a national SSF Guidelines platform

Considering that most small-scale fishers have limited formal education, the abridged SSF Guidelines in English, by John Kurien, had to be translated into the indigenous languages. For this reason, a team of seasoned translators and linguists were commissioned in the Ga, Ewe, Fanti and Nzema languages. The initial copies of the translated drafts were circulated in James Town, Keta, Elmina and Sekondi-Takoradi between October 3 and October 10, 2018. However, the feedback was that the texts were technical and difficult for the average reader to comprehend. This observation led to several reviews that modified the texts to make them easier to read and understand.

The second activity comprised conducting three subnational workshops in 2018 for fishworkers, community-based organizations (CBOs), national fishworker organizations (FWOs) and their local branches. These workshops were held in Accra on November 27, in Takoradi on December 11, and in Keta on December 16. In order to create a high level of awareness and foster a deeper appreciation of the SSF Guidelines, the workshops were conducted in the Ga, Mfantse/Nzema and Ewe languages. Over 90 participants participated in the local workshops.

The three workshops highlighted the guiding principles, themes and roles; they also reflected the unique specific challenges of each location. In Accra, participants prioritized illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, lack of direct involvement in policy making and weak enforcement of fishery laws as major worrying concerns. In Takoradi, fishworkers were more concerned about 'saiko' (illegal trans-shipment of fish at sea), security of tenure regarding management and access to the fishery resources, and worsening livelihoods as a result of commercial oil and gas production. The Keta participants identified poor social infrastructure, lack of enforcement of bye-laws, frequent tidal waves, lack of proper beachfront development and exclusion of fishworkers in decision making as key constraints affecting their livelihoods.

The third activity was the national workshop. Its objective was to identify common SSF challenges from the local workshops and how they can be addressed within a national SSF Guidelines framework. The two-day event was held on August 14-15, 2019, at the University of Ghana. Participants and delegates were drawn from the National Fish Processors and Traders Association (NAFPTA), the Prampram Cooperative Fishmongers Society, the National Inland Canoe Fisherman Council (NICFC), the Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council (GNCFC), the Central & Western Fishmongers Association (CEWEFIA) and the University of Ghana, among others.

The first day followed a discussion of the themes of the SSF Guidelines.

The second day's three-part session programme commenced with a formal welcome address and solidarity statements. This was followed by a presentation by Prof FKE Nunoo on the topic 'The FAO VG-SSF: Nature, Scope and Relevance'. The second session dealt with a presentation of local workshop reports by Peter Adjei of TESCO/ICSF, which formed the basis of focus-group discussions along three strands: one, key national SSF challenges and opportunities for change; two, identifying roles and responsibilities of primary actors in the implementation of the SSF Guidelines; and three, ways forward—actions for addressing key identified and/or prioritized issues.

The group discussion led to the third session that focused on group reports and conclusions. Although there were varying perspectives from the three groups, the key prioritized issues and recommendations at the end of the plenary session were deeply rooted in the local workshops but were broader in scope. The main recommendations of the national workshop include:

**In order to create a high level of awareness and foster a deeper appreciation of the SSF Guidelines, the workshops were conducted in the Ga, Mfantse/Nzema and Ewe languages.**

- Work with the MoFAD and other stakeholders to adopt the SSF Guidelines into enforceable laws and regulations;
- Develop a document for MoFAD to advocate a long-term vision on the SSF Guidelines, with clearly outlined annual plans;
- Conduct a stakeholder analysis of the SSF Guidelines value chain, including a definition of SSF and the relationship with other organized businesses in the fishery sector;
- Increase advocacy efforts regarding inequalities in the SSF sector; and
- Emphasize the need for training and capacity building of FWOs and other interest groups to sustain the dissemination the SSF Guidelines at both national and subnational levels.

TESCOD



Mfantse - Nzema (Takoradi) local workshop, 11 December 2018, SSNIT House Takoradi, Ghana. The workshops were conducted in the Ga, Mfantse/Nzema and Ewe languages. Over 90 participants participated in the local workshops

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The fourth activity was the creation of a national SSF Guidelines platform. To this end, a seven-member national platform was launched on August 15, 2019, at the sidelines of the national workshop. The platform seeks to raise awareness about the SSF Guidelines among various stakeholders and promote human-rights-based SSF through appropriate policy responses.

The initial phase of implementing the SSF Guidelines in Ghana has led to several meaningful outcomes. Besides the development of local language contents, over 120 participants from FWOs, CBOs, academia and MoFAD benefited from local and national workshops. In addition to the establishment of the national platform, the implementation activities by TESCOD/ICSF have been the most visible and comprehensive in Ghana since the adoption of the SSF Guidelines in 2014.

Nonetheless, the year-long implementation was fraught with a number of notable organizational and logistical challenges. Close to three million Ghanaians are dependent on the SSF, spread across hundreds

of communities. It was impractical to directly disseminate the SSF Guidelines in these communities. To achieve greater impact, the TESCOD team did not only engage with FWOs, municipal chief executives (MCEs) and MoFAD officials but also introduced the guidelines directly to chiefs and fishworkers. This approach led to high interest and a diverse blend of workshop participants.

#### **Time constraint**

The time constraint was another challenge. While all the activities were executed as per the timeline, the national workshop date was rescheduled from the original date of February 2019 to August 2019. This was necessary for deeper consultations, back-and-forth communications and in getting the major FWOs, including GNCFC, NAFPTA and NICFC, to harmonize their views and commit to working together to implement the SSF Guidelines.

The committed bottom-up approach came at considerable expense, far above the implementation budget. Many small-scale fishworkers



who expressed interest in attending the events could not do so because of the limited number of invitations allotted to each event.

The initial implementation of the SSF Guidelines in Ghana has, on the whole, met the goals outlined at the beginning of the programme. The participatory process motivated the fishworkers to express themselves eloquently as active participants, not just passive observers. Small-scale fishers from varying backgrounds, for the first time, discussed their roles in responsible fisheries and sustainable development in their mother tongues. Despite these successes, however, many invaluable lessons were learned; the areas where improvements can be made. It's worthwhile to consider them in detail for other such democratic efforts.

**Addressing misperceptions:** A common view among fishworker participants was that because of the voluntary nature of the SSF Guidelines, it would not be worthwhile to address their grievances. This view stems from the belief that stringent enforcement of fisheries bye-laws will rid the sector of the numerous illegal practices, particularly 'saiko'. Continuous effort is, therefore, needed to help fishworkers recognize that while legislative and economic approaches do have certain advantages, for sustainable management of fisheries, the SSF Guidelines address their needs in a more organized, all-inclusive and dignified manner on the basis of guiding principles such as human rights and dignity, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability.

**Training and capacity building:** In order to prepare national and community-based FWOs to be proactive in promoting the SSF Guidelines, they must be assisted to appreciate the human rights-based approach in SSF. Training and capacity building should equip FWOs and community leaders with participatory techniques to educate their members on the SSF Guidelines; align their organizations with human-rights standards; improve collaborations with other actors in the SSF value chain; and take a bigger role in SSF Guidelines advocacy and community monitoring.

**Stakeholder consultation:** Broad consultation can be a factor for change when it is properly facilitated and allows for direct participation of stakeholders or indirectly through their assigned representatives. Attention needs to be given not only to identifying and understanding the influence of each stakeholder but also the perspectives of the disadvantaged and vulnerable early on in the process. Future implementation of the SSF Guidelines should broaden the initial scope of consultations, with more attention to

**...while legislative and economic approaches do have certain advantages, for sustainable management of fisheries, the SSF Guidelines address their needs in a more organized, all-inclusive and dignified manner...**

stakeholders involved in inland SSF, gender justice, tenure rights, saiko, and child labour and trafficking (CLaT).

**Policy integration:** Existing policies for developing and managing SSF are generic, with no specific objectives, measurable outcomes and time-frames. A holistic policy on SSF must be based on human rights and must recognize that small-scale fishworkers have legally mandated rights to use and manage fisheries resources. The next phase of the SSF Guidelines implementation should influence or drive policy alignment of national fisheries laws with the human rights principles and standards enshrined in the SSF Guidelines. ↴

#### For more

**Ghana: Improved awareness about the SSF Guidelines at the community, national and institutional level and better understanding of the challenges facing the implementation of the SSF Guidelines**

<https://igssf.icsf.net/en/page/1083-Ghana.html>

**Ghana: Small Fish, Big Solution**

<https://www.icsf.net/en/samudra/article/EN/83-4426-Small-Fish,-Big.html>

**The SSF Guidelines Summary translated in Ghanaian languages (Ewe, GA, FANTE and NZEWA)**

<https://igssf.icsf.net/en/page/1083-Ghana.html>



# The Missing Link

**Mike Abaka-Edu, President of the Western Region branch of the Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council (GNCFC), makes a compelling case for banning 'saiko' fishing in this interview with Peter Adjei, a Member of ICSF**

**T**he Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council (GNCFC) was formed in 1982 with the objective of promoting the welfare of canoe fishermen. Since then, it has grown to become an umbrella body of fishers and fishery associations in Ghana. The leadership structure comprises district and regional executives and a national executive committee, which forms the governing body of the council. As of 2020, GNCFC had over 100,000 members made up of fishers, chief fishermen, *konkonhema* (queen fishmongers) and canoe and gear owners.

In its formative years, the council was instrumental in sourcing inputs for its members and collaborated with the government to provide subsidised premix fuel for artisanal fishers. In recent years, however, it has shifted its attention to education and advocacy efforts in response to IUU fishing and other unsustainable fishing practices. Mike Abaka-Edu, who joined the GNCFC in 1998, is the Secretary of the Western Region branch. A staunch advocate of fisheries rights and livelihoods, he has been involved in several campaigns to highlight the plight of small-scale fishers in the marine sector.

The SSF sector in Ghana plays an important role in providing food security and supporting livelihoods, contributing to 70-80 per cent of the total annual fish catch. In 2018, of the total volume of 452,679.30 tonnes realized, the marine sector accounted for 302,431.50 tonnes (67 per cent), followed by aquaculture, with 76,620.00 tonnes (17 per cent) and the inland sector, with 73,627.80 tonnes (16 per cent). In terms of nutrition, Ghanaians consume an estimated 25 kg of fish per capita per year. This is higher than Africa's average of 10.5 kg and the

global average of 20.3 kg. To sustain the socioeconomic contribution of small-scale fisheries (SSF), the Fisheries Act 2002 (Act 625) established the Inshore Exclusive Zone (IEZ) exclusively for SSF. Thus, the use of vessels of 50 or more gross registered tonnage (GRT) or bottom trawl in waters less than 30 m deep is prohibited. However, many small-scale fishers complain of frequent incursions into the IEZ by industrial trawlers. In addition, a far more debilitating practice by industrial trawlers is 'saiko', a term used in the Ghanaian fishing industry to refer to the fish passed on (transshipped) by

**...many small-scale fishers complain of frequent incursions into the IEZ by industrial trawlers.**

industrial trawlers to canoe operators at sea. According to studies by the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF), as many as 100 foreign-flagged vessels from the European Union and China are involved in the saiko trade.

**Adjei:** You have always been a strong voice in the GNCFC. Your appointment as the President of the Western Region branch comes as no surprise to me. I am using this medium to officially congratulate you.

**Abaka-Edu:** Thank you, I acknowledge the hard work of my predecessors and support from organizations like yours.

**Adjei:** Thank you for your compliments. The GNCFC and many small-scale fishers are asking the government to ban the transshipment of fish at sea, the one you call saiko. Why?

*This article is by Peter Linford Adjei (pieroquz@gmail.com) of Technical Services for Community Development (TESCOD), Accra, Ghana, and Member, ICSF*

PETER ADJEI



Mike Abaka-Edu, Secretary, Western Region, Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council (GNCFC). The Fisheries Act 2002 prohibits all forms of IUU fishing activities, including saiko, but enforcement of the law has always been the issue, said Abaka-Edu

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**Abaka-Edu:** The simple answer is that saiko is so destructive and unless immediate action is taken, the entire artisanal fishery sector will collapse.

**Adjei:** Just how destructive is saiko fishing?

**Abaka-Edu:** First of all, let me clarify one point — what is actually referred to as “saiko fishing” is incorrect. Saiko is not a fishing activity, rather the greedy targeting of small pelagic fishes by industrial trawlers. The law is clear on this: industrial trawlers are licensed to harvest only demersal or bottom-dwelling fish, whereas the small pelagic fishes, including sardinella and chub mackerel, are reserved for small-scale fishers. With saiko, the industrial trawlers deliberately use undersized mesh nets to target the pelagic fishes and freeze them into slabs. These are later transhipped to saiko canoe operatives and middlemen in the value chain.

**Adjei:** From what you are saying, saiko is supposed to be illegal.

**Abaka-Edu:** Absolutely. Saiko is the most destructive form of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in Ghana today. But our worry

is not about the illegality of saiko. We fear that if the current rate of saiko is not slowed down, the entire industry will collapse because there wouldn't be enough juvenile stocks to replenish the large quantities of the illegally caught pelagic fishes. In fact, our research shows that over 90 per cent of the saiko fish caught are juveniles.

**Adjei:** That is a sobering picture, but is it not true that members of your own organization are also involved in this illegal activity as you put it?

**Abaka-Edu:** I knew this question would come up. As an organization, we do not condone any form of illegal activity, including saiko.

**Adjei:** Are you saying that your members are not engaged in the saiko fish trade?

**Abaka-Edu:** I would not dispute that charge, but let's put things in perspective. Together with other stakeholders, we have carried out several studies on saiko and we can conclude definitely that there are no more than 1,500 saiko operatives. In contrast, there are over 140,000 small-scale fishers and close to 3 mn dependent traders in the small-scale

sector. The national constitution guarantees freedom of association and not every small-scale fisher is a member of the GNCFC. And as I stated earlier, we do not condone any illegality. It is up to the Fisheries Commission and other State institutions to enforce the fishery laws. Should any of our members be found liable, we would co-operate with the law enforcement agencies.

**Adjei:** I am happy you brought up the law enforcement agencies. You seem to be dissatisfied with their work.

**Abaka-Edu:** To be honest with you, we are not satisfied with their performance. It is true they have challenges with funds and logistics, but they can do more to sanitize the system.

**Adjei:** In what ways can they do more with little funds and logistics?

**Abaka-Edu:** In matters of prosecution, for instance. When there is enough evidence to bring offenders before the law, that should be done without delay. There are instances where fishers engaging in illegal activities were apprehended and handed over to the police, only to be released without prosecution. Similarly, the law enforcement agencies are fully aware of saiko but very little has been done to curb the menace.

**Adjei:** Are you satisfied with the laws on saiko?

**Abaka-Edu:** Yes, the Fisheries Act 2002 (Act 625) prohibits all forms of IUU fishing activities and, as I stated earlier, saiko tops the list of the most destructive form of IUU in Ghana. Enforcement of the law has always been the issue. Having said that, GNCFC and, by extension, the small-scale fishery sector would welcome a comprehensive policy to eliminate saiko once and for all time.

**Adjei:** Many NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and CSOs (civil society organizations) have added their voice to the call to end saiko. Have these yielded any positive results?

**Abaka-Edu:** Definitely. We must not forget that the campaign to end saiko and the general public awareness on saiko is the result of several years of research and engagements with CSOs, government agencies and small-scale fishers and fishworkers. Studies by the Environmental Justice

Foundation (EJF) and investigative journalists, for instance, provided enough data and video evidence that brought the destructive aspects of saiko to life. The onus now is on the Fisheries Commission, MoFAD (Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development) and other law enforcement agencies to bring a closure to the practice.

**Adjei:** You recently held a demonstration and presented a petition to government. Can you tell us a bit about it?

**Abaka-Edu:** Let me put on record that as an organization, we have always had a fruitful working relationship with the government. On 8 June 2020, together with other stakeholders, we presented a petition to the president, H. E. Nana Addo Danquah Akuffo Addo, to intervene and help end saiko. We stated in our petition that unless urgent measures are taken to address saiko, the livelihoods of some 2.7 mn Ghanaians dependent on the fishery value chain were at risk and inaction would increase poverty and malnutrition in

**... unless urgent measures are taken to address saiko, the livelihoods of some 2.7 mn Ghanaians dependent on the fishery value chain were at risk...**

at least 200 vulnerable coastal fishing communities. We also highlighted the fact that engagement with over 2,000 fishers across the four coastal regions shows a significant decline in the small pelagic fish stock popularly called the “people’s fish”, as it is the main source of protein for poor households.

**Adjei:** You mentioned that ending saiko is all about enforcement of the Fisheries Act (Act 625) and the enforcement agencies have not been able to enforce the applicable laws on IUU. Tell us, how differently do you expect the President to address your concerns?

**Abaka-Edu:** We are taking advantage of two key factors. First, the president is the co-chair of the SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) Advocates Group and I quote one of his



DOMINIC CHAVEZ / WORLD BANK



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A fisher works on his boat in Accra, Ghana. GNCFC contends that while there are no more than 1,500 saiko operatives, over 140,000 fishers and nearly 3 million traders depend on the small-scale fisheries sector

statements on poverty as follows: “This is a time of great hope for the world. If we work smartly together and stay on course, we can raise millions out of poverty and significantly expand basic social services for many more by the 2030 end date of the SDG.” Secondly, the president, through the 2020 budget statement, declared: “The Ministry (MoFAD) will intensify the implementation of the Fisheries Act, 2002 (Act 625) to ensure that domestic, regional, and international laws that prohibit IUU fishing are strictly enforced through the following: ... all domestic and international fleet that are involved in saiko fishing (i.e., transshipment at sea) shall be banned from fishing in Ghanaian waters.”

**Adjei:** In your opinion, what would it take to end saiko in Ghanaian fishing waters?

**Abaka-Edu:** Saiko is thriving because of weak enforcement of the laws on IUU fishing. The laws must be applied without fear or favour. The regulatory agencies, particularly the Fisheries Commission and related security agencies, including the marine police, must be adequately equipped

and expanded as must the use of appropriate surveillance technology and well-trained field personnel. The SSF Guidelines stress the need for consultations and dialogue among those in the SSF sector and other stakeholders, including regulatory agencies and NGOs, in addressing some of these issues. Such dialogues have been the missing link. 3

#### For more

##### Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council (GNCFC)

<https://twitter.com/ghanacanoe>

##### Legal Analysis on Trans-shipment of Fish at Sea from Industrial Trawlers to Canoes in Ghana

<https://ejfoundation.org/reports/legal-analysis-on-the-trans-shipment-of-fish-at-sea-from-industrial-trawlers-to-canoes-in-ghana>

##### Rich Rewards of Doing it Right

[https://www.icsf.net/images/samudra/pdf/english/issue\\_84/4494\\_art\\_Sam\\_84\\_art13\\_Ghana\\_Peter\\_Linford\\_Adjei.pdf](https://www.icsf.net/images/samudra/pdf/english/issue_84/4494_art_Sam_84_art13_Ghana_Peter_Linford_Adjei.pdf)

## FISHERIES LEGISLATION

### Peru amends law to strengthen fisheries protection in 5-nautical mile zone

On 12 April 2023, Peru's National Congress approved some amendments to the 1992 General Fisheries Law, which have important implications for fisheries management and conservation within the 5-mile zone, especially for the activities of Peru's artisanal fisheries for which this zone is reserved.

Fisheries productivity in Peru is very high. With almost 3,300 km of coastline along the eastern South Pacific – the location of the Humboldt Current and the associated large upwelling system – Peru ranks among the top five countries with the largest fish catches in the world. All these catches are taken within the waters under its jurisdiction, within its 200-mile exclusive economic zone.

Peru also has important artisanal fisheries, with a wide diversity of fishing activities, and employs the largest number of people engaged in fishing and related activities. Such activities provide 80 per cent of employment in fishing and more than half of the income

generated by all Peruvian fishing activities. It is one thing to describe the Peruvian fishery in terms of tonnes caught, but quite another to account for the employment, income and food it provides by itself, as well as by activities that depend on it.

The first five nautical miles are recognized as an area of great importance for the reproduction and breeding of multiple coastal species, and, for this reason, since the beginning of the 1990s, it has been an area where the fishing activities of the industrial fleets (the most numerous being the purse-seine fleet, which catches anchovy for fishmeal, and a small trawler fleet that catches hake for frozen export) have been restricted.

The General Fisheries Law, enacted in 1992, needs to be updated, and this is a process that fishers' organizations and Peruvian civil society have been pushing for several years and which has been responded to in recent months in the Congress of the Republic.

Although it was not possible to approve a text

that completely updates the law, on 12 April the plenary of the Congress approved some amendments to the law...

<https://www.icsf.net/news/samudra-exclusive-peru-moves-to-strengthen-fisheries-protection-in-the-5-nautical-mile-zone-through-amended-law/>

## FISHERIES LIVELIHOODS

### 'Floating toilets' help Cambodia's lake-dwelling poor

Pointing to the murky waters of the Tonle Sap, Si Vorn fights back tears as she recalls her four-year-old daughter dying from diarrhoea after playing in the polluted lake.

Her family of 12 is among 100,000 people living in floating houses on Cambodia's vast inland waterway, and while their village has 70 houses and a primary school, it has no sanitation system.

Now a local social enterprise, Wetlands Work (ww), is trying to tackle the problem by rolling out "floating toilets" to filter waste, but the high cost of installation means for now they are available to only a lucky few.

For generations, villagers whose livelihood depends on fishing have defecated directly into the water that they use for cooking, washing and bathing – risking diarrhoea and even more severe water-borne diseases such as cholera.

"We use this water, we drink this water, and we defecate into this water. Everything!" Si Vorn, 52, told AFP, saying her family fell ill all the time.

"Every day, I worry about my health. Look at the water, there is no sanitation. I'm so worried but I don't know what to do."

More than a million people live on or around Tonle Sap, the world's largest inland fishery, but there is no system in place for managing human waste from the 20,000 floating houses around the lake.

Cambodia, ravaged by war and the genocidal Khmer Rouge in the 1970s, is one of the poorest countries in Southeast Asia.

Around a third of the population does not have access to proper toilets, according to the WaterAid charity, and diarrhoea is a leading killer of children under five.

Wetlands Work hopes its HandyPods, as the floating toilets are properly known, can help Si Vorn's village and others like it in other countries...

<https://www.icsf.net/news/floating-toilets-help-cambodias-lake-dwelling-poor/>

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## ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

### Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council (GNCFC)

The Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council (GNCFC) was founded in 1984 as an association to represent artisanal fishers in Ghana. Currently, it is the lead stakeholder in the artisanal industry, representing the vast majority of artisanal fishers. The council's operation permeates the four coastal regions in Ghana, with a membership of 100,000 fishers.

Fishermen in the artisanal fishing industry of Ghana have recognized the emerging challenges posed by multiple users of Ghana's marine space due to the increasing impoverishment in coastal fishing communities, and food and livelihood insecurity. Their role in safeguarding a sustainable artisanal fishing industry, the need for transparency and accountability

in Ghana's fisheries sector and the overall socio-economic empowerment of artisanal fishers necessitated the formation of GNCFC to contribute to an improved governance of responsible and sustainable



fisheries in the western African nation.

Over the years, the council has collaborated with the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development and the Fisheries Commission. With the support of development projects and local NGOs/CSOs, it has successfully implemented various key fisheries management activities,

specifically in the areas of effort reduction, strengthening enforcement, empowering economic livelihood and building capacity.

Specifically, the GNCFC has contributed immensely to the successful implementation of closed seasons for artisanal fishers, registration of artisanal canoes, development and issuance of canoe identification cards for canoe owners, and formation of beach landing enforcement committees to assist in enforcement and compliance. The GNCFC has also contributed immensely to transforming fishing societies, especially in coastal communities, through community empowerment and integrated development initiatives.

The GNCFC has established networks with both international and local fisheries

organizations and associations. Some of these organizations include: CAOPA, Coastal Resource Centre, University of Rhode Island, Centre for Coastal Management, University of Cape Coast, USAID/Ghana Fisheries Recovery Activity Project, Hen Mpoano, Friends of the Nation and Environmental Justice Foundation, among others.

Contact details:

Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council, NAFAG building, Tema, Ghana.

Mobile: +233244381230 / +233548173691.

Email: [gncfc.ghana@gmail.com](mailto:gncfc.ghana@gmail.com)

Twitter: @GhanaCanoe



## SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES

# Act for transformational change: The IHH study findings

By collating and analyzing the best evidence available, the Illuminating Hidden Harvests (IHH) study sets out to demonstrate the importance of supporting small-scale fisheries to fully realize their contributions to sustainable development. The key findings, embracing harvesting and production, livelihoods and economic value, gender, governance, nutrition and other important features and properties, are discussed further to indicate actions that can be taken.

### Harvesting aquatic foods

Small-scale fisheries are a significant component of global capture fisheries, reaching around 40 per cent of global production. According to the IHH study, the subsector contributes an estimated 36.9 mn tonnes of catch, corresponding to around one-third of global marine catch and nearly the entire inland catch. While these numbers alone are already significant, it should be remembered that they have almost certainly been underestimated, particularly on the inland fisheries side, due to the limited information available for subsistence and smaller-scale fisheries in more remote areas.

The findings of the IHH study highlight the importance of small-scale fisheries to global fisheries production. Although production varies across regions and national economic classifications, it can be quite significant in some areas: for example, a large majority (83 per cent) of total capture production in least developed countries comes from small-scale fisheries. With reference to species composition, small pelagics and tuna, bonito and billfish are highly represented in marine small-scale fisheries catch, and, likewise, cyprinids and tilapia for inland catch.

The environmental interactions of small-scale fisheries vary according to the nature of each fishery, with some having among the lowest footprints across all types of food production.

These interactions depend on various factors: for example, gear type, intensity of fishing operation, and the particular environment in which the fisheries operate. Coupled with local and global environmental changes (including climate change) that are imposing unprecedented challenges at a broad scale, these interactions have consequences for future small-scale fisheries catches and production systems, and the benefits that these create. While small-scale fisheries could, by definition, have a lower impact on the environment than large-scale fisheries, there is not sufficient evidence to conclude what their aggregate impact is.

The pressures and drivers, both cumulative and in isolation, need to be understood if they are to be remedied, mitigated or adapted to. At the same time as the environmental interactions of small-scale fisheries need to be understood and considered, the food security and nutrition and livelihood roles of small-scale fisheries need to be acknowledged in environmental and biodiversity conservation policies so that the trade-offs between environmental, social and economic goals, especially in situations of poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition, can be identified and included in related policies.

While the reported volumes of small-scale fisheries catch are significant in themselves for better understanding the overall importance of the subsector, there is also great value in understanding how this information is incorporated in policies, strategies and decisions relating to fisheries governance, food systems, livelihoods and poverty eradication. Understanding catch volume and species composition at

appropriate scales is also critical for effective fisheries management. In combination with qualitative information gathered from fishers, processors and managers (among others), data on catch and species trends can be used in quantitative or qualitative approaches to assess the state of fish stocks. This information is important to the implementation of adaptive management measures to ensure



biological sustainability, in line with SDG Target 14.4 (i.e. "effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing"). Moreover, additional data on fishing effort, fleet characteristics and gear types, as well as information on market trends and climate change, are essential in reducing uncertainties and improving the assessment and management of small-scale fisheries.

The use of a range of information from different sources is also in line with the SSF Guidelines, which recognize the importance of sustainable resource management and adopting measures for long-term sustainable use of fishery resources and securing the ecological foundation for food production. Appropriate management systems should be implemented, taking into account the

particular requirements and opportunities presented by small-scale fisheries (paragraph 5.13). For this, the SSF Guidelines also recognize the need for governments to "establish systems of collecting fisheries data, including bioecological, social, cultural and economic data relevant for decision-making on sustainable management of small-scale fisheries" (paragraph 11.1).

As small-scale fisheries often target and harvest species that are also exploited by large-scale fisheries, information on catch provenance and composition and the functioning of production systems is needed not only to inform management and governance of the small-scale subsector but also to establish where these fisheries fit within broader fisheries-management frameworks. This knowledge has implications for overarching decisions on fisheries sustainability and ecosystem effects at all scales. If data on small-scale fisheries catch are missing or inadequate, there can be significant ramifications for fisheries management that also affect the large-scale subsector. This widespread problem can be seen, for example, in small-scale tuna fisheries, whose activities and harvests have implications for stock assessments and harvest quotas. Some regional fisheries management organizations and stakeholders acknowledge that they require far more detailed information on small-scale fisheries catch to effectively manage some, or all, the species for which they have competence. Thus, filling this data and information gap would allow for improved monitoring and management of these resources across the harvesting segment of the value chain.

Source: *Illuminating Hidden Harvests: The contributions of small-scale fisheries to sustainable development*  
<http://www.fao.org/3/cc4576en/cc4576en.pdf>

## INFOLOG: NEW RESOURCES AT ICSF

### Publications and Infographics

#### Social Development and Sustainable Fisheries Series by ICSF

<https://www.icsf.net/useful-resources/all-icsf-publications/>

This publication details the series of studies on 'Social Development and Sustainable Fisheries' conducted by ICSF in eight countries to examine how social development of small-scale fishing communities contributes to responsible and sustainable small-scale fisheries. The following countries were studied: **Antigua and Barbuda, Costa Rica, Ghana, The Philippines, Bangladesh, Brazil, Thailand and India (Kerala/Tamil Nadu and West Bengal)**

#### Report of the Workshop on Sea Safety and Fisheries Management: Training and Capacity Development of Local Self-Governments, 01–02 March 2023, Thrissur, Kerala

[https://www.icsf.net/resources/report-of-the-workshop-on-sea-safety-lsg\\_icsf\\_kila\\_2023/](https://www.icsf.net/resources/report-of-the-workshop-on-sea-safety-lsg_icsf_kila_2023/)

This report on the two-day workshop organized to enhance the capacity of representatives of local self-government institutions, saw participation from officers of the Department of Fisheries, Kerala, and representatives from fishworker organizations, civil society organizations (CSOs) and community-based organizations. The publication is also available in Malayalam

#### MEL4SSF Piloting Philippines by Ronald B. Rodriguez

<https://www.icsf.net/resources/mel4ssf-piloting-philippines/>

MEL4SSF took into consideration the Philippines governance context, characterized by a more decentralized and devolved governance structure. The piloting process uncovered possible impacts and opportunities on the implementation of the SSF Guidelines initiatives, as well as in monitoring and evaluating initiatives under the SSF Guidelines.

#### MEL4SSF Piloting Ghana by Peter Linford Adjei

<https://www.icsf.net/resources/mel4ssf-piloting-ghana/>

This report details a pilot of the MEL4SSF in Ghana in which 42 officials and SSF leaders were interviewed, 13 focus group discussions (FGDs) with 227 participants conducted, and over 20 major legislative and policy documents reviewed.

#### Report on Latin American and Caribbean Workshop – IYAF 2022: Celebrating Sustainable and Equitable Small-scale Fisheries, 2-5 November 2022, Brazil

<https://www.icsf.net/resources/report-on-latin-american-and-caribbean-workshop-iyafa-2022/>

The Latin American and Caribbean workshop was the second of the series of four regional workshops planned by ICSF in connection with the proclamation of 2022 as the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAF) by the United Nations. This publication is also available in Spanish and Portuguese

#### Report on National Training of Trainers (TOT) Workshop on the SSF Guidelines (Marine Fisheries) October 13-15, 2022, Asha Nivas Social Service Centre, Chennai, India

[https://www.icsf.net/resources/report-tot-marine-fisheries\\_2022/](https://www.icsf.net/resources/report-tot-marine-fisheries_2022/)

The three-day workshop was organized with an aim to enhance the capacity of fishworker organizations, CSOs and community-based organizations to engage with the SSF Guidelines to negotiate issues of concern in regard to policy, legislation, lives and livelihoods of the SSF communities.

#### Baffling Shades of Blue: Addressing the Impacts of the Blue Economy on Small-scale Fisheries in Latin America

<https://www.icsf.net/resources/baffling-shades-of-blue-economy-latin-america/>

This report draws on scholarship from the trenches and research centres across 10 Latin American countries. Based on extensive interviews, policy reviews, and analyses of finances and online datasets, it examines, in detail, how 'Blue Growth' affects artisanal fishers and their need for equity and justice.

## FLASHBACK

### Small scale, large agenda

The 25th Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) of the Food and Agriculture of the United Nations (FAO) was held from 24 to 28 February 2003 at Rome. Notably, one of the agenda items was on 'Strategies for Increasing the Sustainable Contribution of Small-scale Fisheries to Food Security and Poverty Alleviation'. The last time small-scale fisheries was on the agenda of COFI was 20 years ago, in 1983, in the lead-up to the FAO World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development in 1984.



The inclusion of this agenda item was particularly appropriate, given the recently organized World Food Summit and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, both of which focused on the importance of eradicating hunger and poverty. It was also appropriate in view of the process being initiated by the FAO to develop "voluntary guidelines to achieve the progressive realization of the right to adequate food", as a follow-up to the World Food Summit.

The inclusion of this agenda item once again reaffirmed the important role small-scale fisheries plays, especially in the developing world, in providing income, employment and in contributing to food security.

What was needed, however, was a much stronger endorsement that the small-scale model of fisheries development is inherently more suitable, even on grounds of environmental sustainability, a key issue of concern today. In this context, it is worth recalling the observation made in the report of a joint study by the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme, Commission of the European Communities and FAO in 1992, titled *A Study of International Fisheries Research*: "... in many situations, the comparative advantages may lie with the small-scale sector. It is labour intensive, consumes less fuel, generally uses more selective gear, and is less dependent on imported equipment and materials. The small-scale sector's capital is owned locally, often by the fishers themselves. And because the small-scale fishers depend on resources adjacent to their communities, they have a greater self-interest than large-scale fishers in management of their fisheries."

With many fisheries the world over showing evident signs of overfishing, the imperative is to create a policy environment supportive of small-scale fisheries using selective gear. One of the most crucial prerequisites for this, as mentioned in the paper prepared by the FAO Secretariat for this agenda item, is the need for "better management through the allocation of secure fishing rights—backed by appropriate legislation—to small-scale fishers in coastal and inland zones and their effective protection from industrial fishing activity or activities that degrade aquatic resources and habitats."

Moreover, in view of the increasing technological capacity of the small-scale fleet to harvest resources in deeper waters, as well as the greater pressure on inshore resources, it is appropriate that governments extend the areas reserved for exclusive exploitation by the small-scale fleet within their exclusive economic zones (EEZs). This will also, in no small measure, contribute to increasing safety at sea, as many accidents result from both the industrial and small-scale fleets using the same marine space. Many small-scale fishworkers have lost their craft and gear, and even their lives, as a result of accidents involving industrial fleets.

A clear recognition of the inherent superiority of the small-scale model of fisheries development and a reallocation of resources in favour of small-scale fisheries, is the need of the hour. Given that it is State policies that have supported industrial fisheries, often at the expense of both small-scale fisheries and environmental sustainability, and even in areas where small-scale fleets are capable of operating effectively, a reorientation of these policies is urgent.

A vote for small-scale fisheries would be a vote for long-term socioeconomic and environmental benefits over short-term profits, for livelihoods and a dignified existence for many over benefits for a few.

— from SAMUDRA Report No. 34, March 2003

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### MEETINGS

**19th Session Sub-Committee on Fish Trade, Bergen, Norway – from 11 to 15 September 2023**

<https://www.fao.org/about/meetings/cofi-sub-committee-on-fish-trade/en/>

**Twenty-fifth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, 16 – 20 October 2023, Nairobi, Kenya**

<https://www.ebd.int/meetings/SBSTTA-25>

**European Workshop: IYAF 2022-Celebrating Sustainable and Equitable Small-scale Fisheries, November, 2023**

<https://www.icsf.net/>

### WEBSITE

**ICSF Archives/Digital library**  
<http://icsfarchives.net/>

ICSF's Archives/Digital library is a repository of ICSF's collections of over three decades, built up since ICSF's Documentation Centre was set up in Chennai, India, in 1999, with the aim of gathering all kinds of information pertinent to small-scale fisheries and making it available to all stakeholders in an easy and rapid-access format. Currently, the digital archive has over 2,000

original documents and more than 12,000 curated links.

The archive's papers are listed under the following major themes related to fisheries: Aquaculture; Biodiversity; Decent Work; Disasters and Climate Change (including COVID-19); Fisheries Trade; Gender in Fisheries and Aquaculture; Right to Resources (including access rights and tenure); and the SSF Guidelines.



# A Good Year

Interview with Jojo Solomon, president, Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council (GNCF) on how artisanal fishers should fish responsibly

## On responsible fisheries

Most countries look up to Ghana when it comes to responsible fisheries and management. Fortunately for us, this time around, we have a minister who has at least demonstrated a political will to do that which is right politically. Ghana is moving forward with a lot of reforms.

## On tenure rights

Most of our development partners, in collaboration with the Fisheries Commission, are trying to work alongside the Lands Commission to ensure that fishers are comfortable. That they have the right to remain where they have been over the years

## On access rights

Fisheries have existed for a long time. If we now introduce other people into this space, we must be mindful of those who are there already, those whose livelihoods are situated there. I think equity must be one of the issues of petition to the government from the Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council. The fishing communities are at the seashores and, therefore, we cannot displace them because of oil and gas for hotels and modern development. Fisheries support over 3 million livelihoods directly and indirectly; that is about 10 per cent of the population, all adults. We know that development comes with its own challenges. We need to guard against all these things before they happen.

## On reforms

In the face of the problems confronting the artisanal fishers by the operations of industrial units, the minister has put several measures in place. For the first time in about 20 years, fishers are consistently landing fish, even species that we haven't seen in that duration. The ministerial directive on the gear regime reforms is very efficient. She personally would board the vessels and do a pre-departure inspection. When the vessels get back, nobody touches the fish until she is personally there. Again she is making sure that the vessels are duly seaworthy and registered before she even takes up talk about issuing licences or renewing them. She makes sure that any vessel that has committed an infraction years ago will have no licence; all charges are to be paid before the licences are renewed. That is how we now have about 25-27 vessels there, out of about a hundred vessels. Artisanal fishers must also live up to the expectations and fish

**Light fishing is a serious issue for us. We are still educating the fishers. It is kind of difficult because we, as an association or a council, cannot and do not have the right to enforce**

they have been fishing, especially in the face of oil discovery and development. The Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development, in collaboration with partners, has taken up most of the issues pertaining to tenure rights. However, when we talk about fishing grounds, we have a few challenges. Most of the blocks have been, I think, allocated to these oil exploration companies. Taking all these things into consideration, we have started addressing these matters with the ministry and the commission. The Blue Economy will come with its own challenges and, therefore, we want to be proactive, instead of being reactive and waiting for something to happen before we show up.

*This interview with Jojo Solomon (solomon.jojo1957@gmail.com), president, Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council (GNCF), Accra, Ghana was conducted by N.Venugopalan Programme Manager, ICSF (icsf@icsf.net)*



Jojo Solomon, president, Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council (GNCF). Artisanal fishers must also live up to the expectations and fish responsibly, says Jojo Solomon

responsibly. By giving out appropriate fishing nets at 50 per cent subsidy, the minister has ensured that every canoe and artisanal fisher gets an opportunity to discard wrong gear and replace it with nets of approved size. Very soon, there will be a massive inspection of gears in the artisanal sector as well, with the support of the Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council.

#### **On compensation for workers working on industrial vessels**

Being on the Fisheries Commission's board, I am familiar with the reforms that are on-going. I am also familiar with the fisheries committee on settlement and, therefore, I am well informed that abuses on the vessels are now a thing of the past. Because the Ministry takes a very serious view of how the crew are treated, the sanitation and sleeping conditions on board, and the state of the vessels. The ministry has actually mandated the Ghana Maritime Authority to make sure that all vessels are fully certified internationally before they come for issuance of certificates. The International Labour

Organization (ILO) is also engaging them on issues related to decent work and compensation and allowance to meet international standards.

#### **On conflicts between small-scale fishers and industrial fishers**

The first thing to be tackled was the size of the nets, by the ministerial directive on gear reforms. Instead of 40 metres, the size is now down to 10 metres. These reforms are in place. There is no transshipment. The minister inspects the landed catch to make sure that there are no small pelagics, which is the sole preserve of the small-scale or artisanal fishers. That is why I say that for the first time in about 20 years, fishers are getting their due. I think this is fantastic.

#### **On implementation**

I know that we've always had the vessel monitoring system (VMS) on board. With the automatic identification system (AIS) becoming mandatory now, we have the human element to contend with, which is the observers on board. But then the ministry realized

there are so many unauthorized activities going on. So now they have decided to embark on closed circuit television (CCTV) camera or electronic monitoring system as well. Everything that is humanly, electronically or technologically possible to ensure that industrial trawlers live up to expectation, it is being put in place. It is not 100 per cent foolproof, but we are making immense progress. I think the goings-on in Ghana should be emulated by our regional neighbours. They are carefully monitoring what is going on in Ghana. We had a successful closed season to discuss the results. We are now also registering and embossing the canoe fleet, giving them identification cards to help in monitoring. The policy and budget processes are also expected to be reformed as well. There's a lot going on.

#### **On overfishing, warming waters, plastics and marine debris**

These are global problems, not confined to Ghana. I think that neglect by the relevant authorities and indiscipline amongst the non-State actors themselves culminated in these problems. The ministry is now looking into all these. This has encouraged us to fish responsibly and be conscious to keep our beaches clean.

#### **On reduced catch of small pelagics like herring, sardines, anchovies**

This year, in the Volta region and part of the greater Accra region, two of our four marine regions, we have had cause to stop fishers because the landings of the anchovies were overwhelming and we realized we need to ask the fishers to slow down. We actually had to ask the fishermen to give us a break.

#### **On a moratorium of canoe fishing**

We have held a national dialogue. The minister and the commissioner met with the chiefs in the coastal region, the ministers in the coastal region, the district executives, and the municipal, district and metropolitan chief executives. We are now into community engagement and have reached regional agreements with the fishers and voiced the need for closure because clearly there is overcapacity

and overfishing. We cannot continue to practice the open-access system. There are too many canoes and fishers chasing very little, fast-depleting stocks, without letting them recover. So it does not make sense. We are now at overcapacity. Instead of around 9,000 canoes that can sustainably fish, we had almost 13,000 canoes. Clearly, we must close access.

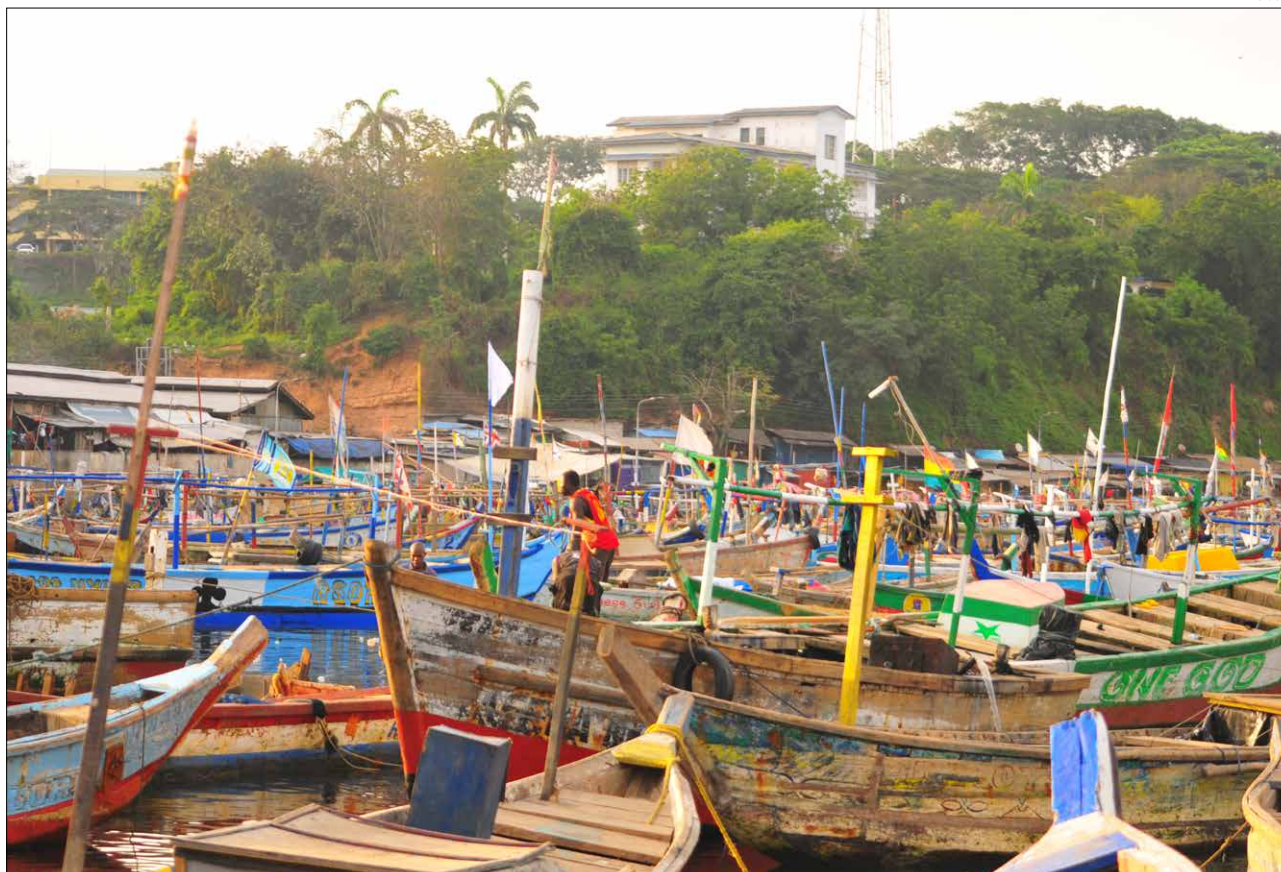
#### **On the fight against destructive fishing**

Light fishing is a serious issue for us. We are still educating the fishers. It is kind of difficult because we, as an association or a council, cannot and do not have the right to enforce. So all we do is augment the government's efforts by educating our people and sanctioning them; but I must admit it is not easy. Sometimes these things were done out of desperation. One cannot compete with industrial trawlers; they have very good technology on board. They have GPS and everything that it takes to locate and capture fish, while we are still doing things the old artisanal way. We have come up with a communication strategy called the F2F (fisher-to-fisher) dialogue. It gets to the point that fishers must trust their own leadership. They need to listen when their own colleague fishers tell them to stop what they are doing. It does not help us if people from outside the industry come and speak to them, even if they are from the commission or from the partners; it is kind of difficulty. So we have cast out this avenue or channel called the F2F dialogue to help fishers understand why they should practise closed season, and why they should register their canoes. We have to surmount these problems and we cannot do it all in a day. It is not as if all fishers are engaged in light fishing. Some of them do not like light fishing. I think overcoming it is a process.

#### **On chemical pollutants**

I think our fishery is safe, by and large. We engage with the food and drug authority. We have the Ghana Standards authority working alongside our processors to test the fish. Even in the case of light fishing, we don't believe it uses any hazardous component,





Albert Bosomtwi-Sam Fishing Harbour, Sekondi, Western Region, Ghana. We cannot continue to practice the open-access system. There are too many canoes and fishers chasing very little, fast-depleting stocks, without letting them recover. So it does not make sense, say fishers

except that it aggregates all the fish, both the juveniles and the adults. Since the size of the nets are not prescribed, they catch almost everything, depleting stocks. We are pushing out the few recalcitrant fishers and educating them. The Food and Drugs Authority and the Ghana Standards Authority issue certificates to fishers and I think we can safely say that yes, our fish is wholesome.

#### On co-management

The co-management policy has not really taken off. The idea behind it is that fishers and policymakers would come together and take decisions so that nobody works blind and the right thing is done. As under the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, we believe fishers must be part of decision making right from the stage of conception through to implementation. Only then can we own the system and promote voluntary compliance. If we are part of the decision making, we

understand the issues clearly and there is no suspicion or acrimony. We end up with a system that also works well for industry.

#### On the potential theme for a training programme

First of all, I think responsible fisheries is the key. Our fishery has got into this stage because of indiscipline and irresponsibility. We need to recover our fisheries, we need them to support livelihoods. The government cannot be expected to find a million jobs let alone three million jobs. So fishers must be confronted with their bad habits. If these are taken out, I believe all other bad things will go as well. ♣

#### For more



##### The Missing Link

<https://www.icsf.net/samudra/the-missing-link/>

##### Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council (GNCFC)

<https://twitter.com/GhanaCanoe>

##### MEL4SSF Piloting Ghana by Peter Linford Adjei

<https://www.icsf.net/resources/mel4ssf-piloting-ghana/>

##### Social Development and Sustainable Fisheries: Ghana

<https://www.icsf.net/resources/icsf-social-development-ghana/>

# Beyond Knee-jerk Reactions

**Ghana's efforts at providing social development, employment and decent work in its fisheries sector must focus on improving education, health and social protection in fishing communities**

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**G**hana has about 550 km of coastline on the Atlantic Ocean, along the Gulf of Guinea. Within the coastal space, more than two million people are directly and indirectly engaged in fisheries. The country's engagement with the sea results in about 300,000 tonnes of fish every year, apart from nearly 74,000 tonnes from its inland waters. These landings still meet less than half the national demand because almost all its citizens eat fish. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Ghanaians

have intervened in several ways. The benefits of decent work include a fair wage, security at work and social protection for families, improved opportunities for personal growth and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, to organize and take part in decisions that affect their lives, and equality of opportunity and treatment for women and men.

Decent work, therefore, encompasses much more than what is provided; it may not be fully realized in many industries; the absence of serious abuses is unquestionably essential. The International Labour Organization (ILO) identifies four interrelated pillars of decent work: one, employment generation and enterprise development; two, standards and rights at work; three, social protection; and, four, governance and social dialogue among, say, employers, workers and governments.

Based on these, the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines) provided, to its member countries, some tenets for social development, employment and decent work in small-scale fisheries (SSF). In this article, we seek to assess Ghana's efforts at providing social development, employment and decent work in its fisheries sector.

## Decent work

In Ghana, work in fisheries and related activities is considered decent; fishers and fishmongers are proud of their work which carries no negative social attachment. Despite being a major

**In Ghana, work in fisheries and related activities is considered decent; fishers and fishmongers are proud of their work which carries no negative social attachment**

consume 25.3 kg of fish per person each year. Therefore, to meet the national demand, canned fish (mainly herrings and sardines) and frozen mackerels are imported.

Even as fishing continues to be a major contributor to livelihood and employment in many countries, the issues related to the working environment of fishworkers are paramount. Concerns for human rights in fisheries and the labour practices associated with producing seafood have increased recently, partly because of publicly-reported labour abuses and deplorable working conditions in the industry. As a response, numerous governments and civil society entities

*This article is by Benjamin Betey Champion (bbcampion.fnr@knust.edu.gh), Department of Fisheries and Watershed Management at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana and Zereth Blankson (zerethblankson19@gmail.com), Department of Fisheries and Watershed Management at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana*



ZERETH BLANKSON / KNUST



Fish smoking using the metal drum in Kumasi, Ghana. One initiative to mitigate the problem of smoke is the newly invented 'Ahoto' oven, which has proven to be healthier and safer

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source of employment, livelihood and way of life, Ghana's fisheries industry is on the verge of collapse due to overfishing and over-capitalisation of the fishery. Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is common. The largely artisanal industry competes for small pelagic stocks with industrial fishing boats. The political interests in both artisanal and industrial fishers make it difficult to find a way out. The artisanal fishers of Ghana, therefore, find themselves caught in a vicious cycle of IUU fishing practices as a coping strategy to declining catch.

The main artisanal fishing gear is the hand-crafted wood canoe, with or without an outboard motor. The promises of assistance to help them get fibreglass boats have not delivered. To exacerbate the situation, the average annual income per canoe has decreased by as much as 40 percent over the last 10 to 15 years. The fishery is overcapitalized and no fishing quotas or licence requirements for these artisanal fishers exist. The government has attempted to solve the free entry into the fishery through a canoe census and registration. These

have largely not worked because of the lack of political will to enforce the laws. Fisheries management is top-down in Ghana: the government is expected to put in place measures to sustain the industry. Ghana has been flagged by the European Union (EU) for IUU, and it

**Fisheries management is top-down in Ghana: the government is expected to put in place measures to sustain the industry**

is hoped that this will be an opportunity to introduce appropriate mechanisms to stop the bad practices.

#### **Knee-jerk promises**

The SSF Guidelines urge governments to increase the proportion of total government spending on essential services like education, health and social protection in the sector. What exists are knee-jerk interventions and promises during the election season. Nothing is sustained afterwards. With climate change, the risks and frequency

of disasters affecting fisheries are on the rise. Fishermen work throughout their lives and have neither retirement benefits nor social security. To improve the social protection of Ghanaian fisherfolk, the government initiated an insurance scheme. At its launch in 2016, more than one million fishers were to benefit. The scheme was going to safeguard their canoes, outboard motors, fishing nets and other fishing inputs. Till date, though, there is not proof of the scheme's implementation.

Ghanaian fishing communities labour under some of the worst social services and infrastructure that can be found. News about access to education in some fishing communities of the Volta River is widely reported through the frequent incidents of students from distant communities drowning in their quest to reach schools. They travel long distances on the water to get to schools and are exposed to danger. Such difficulties mean children have to wait till a relatively late age to begin school. The dropout rate is high in such communities.

**... the targeting and selection of beneficiaries for many of the government interventions are usually fraught with political interests**

The health sector is in a poor state also. People have no option to travelling over long distances to seek basic healthcare. The National Health Insurance Scheme, implemented to reduce the burden of healthcare, is highly under-subscribed among the fishers. Several studies have shown that fishworkers are at high risk of acquiring lung diseases due to their long exposure to smoke. Not surprisingly, the health of fishmongers has attracted the attention of researchers and civil society organizations (CSOs).

One initiative to mitigate the problem of smoke is the newly invented 'Ahoto' oven, which has proven to be healthier and safer. The new oven consumes less fuel and has a fat collector that retains the

fish oil, which can be used for other purposes. It also has a chimney that reduces the smoke or directs it away from the smoker. Unfortunately, the fishworkers have not adopted this new technology.

The SSF Guidelines seek to reduce child labour in the ssf. But child labour and trafficking has been widely reported in Ghana's fishing communities. The distinction between child labour and children's work is a very slight; many fishers neither agree with the categorization of their training nor deign to obtain assistance from their children under the guise of child labour. Some children have been rescued from hazardous fishing activities and are being given new opportunities. The incidence of poverty in Ghanaian communities drives parents to expose children to hazardous work. An increase in access to education will be a first step to reducing the incidence of child labour among fishing communities.

Poverty in fishing communities is deep-seated and efforts to reduce this must be as rigorous and as diametrical as possible through the building of capacity to change the lives of the people in these circumstances. Therefore, the SSF Guidelines recommend the setting up vocational training centres in ssf communities to build capacity and diversify into alternative livelihood sources. To this end, a school called the Anomabo Fisheries College is being set up to train the next generation of fishers about Ghanaian fisheries and aquaculture.

An alternative Livelihood and Revolving Fund has been set up to increase the profit of fisherfolk while strengthening the country's capacity to sustainably manage the fisheries, reduce illegal fishing, enhance value addition, and develop aquaculture. Furthermore, *ad hoc* training in financial management, savings and investment is being provided by several government agencies and NGOs. However, the targeting and selection of beneficiaries for many of the government interventions are usually fraught with political interests. A lot of these promises or interventions are yet to become operational.





Outboard motorised canoes loading goods and passengers on the Volta Lake at Yeji, Ghana. The incidence of poverty in Ghanaian communities drives parents to expose children to hazardous work

### Good news

Despite these shortcomings, it is possible to conclude this assessment with some good news. The sector has made significant achievements in governance. There are traditional institutions of fisheries governance, such as the chief fishman and *konkohemaa* (chief fishmonger), which are highly respected and play significant roles. At the national level, SSF representatives and their organizations have the membership of the managing authority of Ghana's fisheries, the Fisheries Commission. They are the National Fisheries Association (Fishing Vessel Owners), the National Fisheries Association (Artisanal Fishermen), and the Ghana Marine Fishing Officers' Association. These associations are vibrant; their presence and interventions are well appreciated.

In accordance with the SSF Guidelines, policies and programmes

related to fisheries in Ghana are being developed with the involvement of these organizations, along with other institutions. The successes in fisheries governance and representation must translate into reversing the situation of the fishery, which is on the verge of collapse, and help reduce IUU fishing. Programmes and initiatives of governments and CSOs with interest in fisheries should focus on improving education, health and social protection in fishing communities.

### For more



#### No Child's Play

[https://www.icsf.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/4308\\_art\\_Sam77\\_e\\_art07.pdf](https://www.icsf.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/4308_art_Sam77_e_art07.pdf)

#### Social Development and Sustainable Fisheries: Ghana by Peter L.A.

<https://www.icsf.net/resources/icsf-social-development-ghana/>

#### The smoke lingers on

[https://www.icsf.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/42\\_art07.pdf](https://www.icsf.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/42_art07.pdf)

#### The State of World Fisheries from a Fishworker Perspective: The Ghanaian Situation

<https://www.icsf.net/resources/the-state-of-world-fisheries-from-a-fishworker-perspective-the-ghanaian-situation-2/>

# Go Back, Retrieve It

The Sankofa Project seeks to investigate the gendered socio-economic effects of the fisheries closure in four coastal regions of Ghana to understand how the policy affects communities

A research project was launched in Ghana to focus on equitable, inclusive and sustainable fisheries management. Titled Creating Synergies between Indigenous Practices and Scientific Knowledge (ISIPSK), it is led by Okafor-Yarwood at the University of St Andrews in Scotland, and funded by the PEW Fellows Program in Marine Conservation at the Pew Charitable

The Sankofa project seeks to investigate the gendered socio-economic effects of the fisheries closure in four coastal regions of Ghana to understand how the policy affects communities, especially its impacts on women, who typically process, distribute and sell the catch. The project will involve working with community leaders and fishers to identify practices inspired by local ecological knowledge that can be integrated with state-sanctioned management interventions to inform the development of more sustainable, equitable and locally appropriate marine conservation measures.

The project focuses on Ghana's four coastal regions: Volta, Central, Western and Greater Accra. However, data collection could be extended to communities in other countries, such as Ivory Coast or Togo, in the pilot phase of implementing a closed fishing season. The latter will inform areas of intersection, allowing developments to be viewed through a cross-comparative case study.

The objectives of this project are three-fold: one, advancing knowledge on the gendered impact of the closed fishing season, focusing on socio-economic implications, using an interdisciplinary (science-policy interface) and cross-regional approach; two, examining how indigenous practices can be integrated into marine conservation interventions; and, three, developing innovative ways of disseminating information to develop an effective sub-regional fisheries conservation and sustainable livelihood plan.

## Collaboration

CaFGOAG is a sub-contractor and the fishers association collaborating on the project and other collaborators

In Ghana, after the near collapse of several important fisheries, the government implemented closed fishing seasons, including a one-month-per-year closure for small-scale artisanal fishers

Trust. Local partners from Ghana collaborating with the university for the research initiative include the Fisheries Commission of Ghana, the Fisheries Committee for West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC), and the Canoe and Fishing Gear Owners Association of Ghana (CaFGOAG). The project is now named 'Sankofa', meaning, to wit, 'go back and retrieve it'. In this particular case, it refers to going back to retrieve positive historical practices that promote sustainable fisheries.

Fisheries are vital to food security and the livelihoods of millions of people in West Africa. Despite this, the region's fisheries suffer from over-exploitation, pollution and the impacts of climate change. In Ghana, after the near collapse of several important fisheries, the government implemented closed fishing seasons, including a one-month-per-year closure for small-scale artisanal fishers. Although intended to improve fisheries sustainability, the closure has had broad economic and social impacts.

This article is by **Nana Kweigyah** ([nkweigyah@gmail.com](mailto:nkweigyah@gmail.com)), National President of Canoe and Fishing Gear Owners Association of Ghana (CaFGOAG), Ghana



Fishermen mending net, Canoe Basin, Tema. Train more members in data collection and prioritize fishers' participation in data collection to support the implementation of fisheries co-management in Ghana's artisanal fisheries sector is the next action plan

contributed to identifying the research sites across the four regions where data will be collected. They also helped in designing the research questions and appropriate methodologies for data collection. As part of its role, CaFGOAG will support access to research sites, support community entry and other resources required for the successful completion of the project, identify relevant stakeholders to participate in the research, and create awareness about the project among stakeholders. CaFGOAG has provided two research assistants for the project and will promote the implementation of the recommendations based on the research findings.

On 24 November 2023, project partners held a successful first inception meeting, hosted by the executive director of the Fisheries Commission. The meeting was called to enable a discussion among partners on the project implementation strategies, the selection of project sites, and the responsibility of collaborators. A series

of engagements was planned among collaborators to finalize arrangements before data collection.

By 2024, three meetings have been held already. The first was on 12 March 2024. The discussions centred on the project sites, research methodology and tools, communication tools, and resources needed for the successful implementation of the project. The second meeting was on 16 April 2024, discussing the community entry plan presented by CaFGOAG and the training for research assistants on the methodology and instrument for data collection, which is scheduled for May. Fieldwork and data collection are slated for July 2024 and will be preceded by community and stakeholder engagements. The third meeting, held on 7 May 2024, was the first of a two-part training for research assistants, with the second scheduled for later in preparation for fieldwork in July.

The project is in line with the principles of Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale



Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines). The project will specifically highlight the plight of small-scale fishers in the face of declining fisheries, as well as the implementation of conservation measures. The project will contribute to secure sustainable small-scale fisheries in Ghana through the promotion of integration of indigenous ecological knowledge with state-sanctioned management interventions to inform the development of more sustainable and locally appropriate marine conservation measures.

### The expectations

The project will mobilize and support women and men in maritime small-scale fisheries to make a major contribution to livelihood, employment, food security and revenue by promoting their participation in decision-making, and implementation of measures that reflect the aspirations of fishing communities. This will contribute to achieving healthy and resilient fishing communities.

The project partners cut across researchers, policy makers, regulators and fishers working together to inform fisheries policy and implementation. This is remarkable at a time when Ghana is at an early stage of implementing the fisheries co-management policy. Planned engagements with the Small Pelagic Co-Management Committees will further strengthen the committees and make them effective. This collaboration is beneficial for a number of reasons.

One, it will enhance the credibility and legitimacy of the research findings, which is very important for influencing policy decisions. It offers fishers the opportunity to have input into management interventions that reflect their aspirations. For CaFGOAG, it enhances the credibility of the work the association does, both now and in the future.

Two, the collaboration offers an opportunity for training and capacity building for members of CaFGOAG, something very much needed to increase knowledge and experiences, which will positively impact the work of CaFGOAG and artisanal fishers in Ghana.

Three, the collaboration is important for data sharing and access. This collaboration offers many prospects for facilitating access to valuable resources from partners that CaFGOAG can rely upon in engagements with members and other stakeholders.

Four, CaFGOAG has the opportunity to receive valuable insight and expertise guidance from partners, particularly the University of St Andrews, as technical assistance for its work as a fishers' association, which will improve effectiveness and efficiency. Through this collaboration, the university is making available to CaFGOAG equipment that will aid the organization's role in the research project and its work even later on after the project concludes.

And, finally, five, the collaboration expands CaFGOAG's professional networks, connecting the association with researchers, policymakers, regulators and other stakeholders. CaFGOAG will leverage this to improve engagement with all relevant fisheries stakeholders in the quest to effectively participate in fisheries management and governance with a goal of ensuring sustainable fisheries livelihoods for members and all fishworkers in Ghana. The benefits of the collaboration on this research project are enormous, and CaFGOAG needs to put the experiences to be gained to good use. To this end CaFGOAG plans to:

- Sustain and expand the network of collaborators and partners for more policy research projects and other initiatives. Collaborations will be explored for fisheries policy advocacy initiatives towards more inclusive fisheries governance.
- Train more members in data collection and prioritize fishers' participation in data collection to support the implementation of fisheries co-management in Ghana's artisanal fisheries sector. This will also improve the science-policy interface anchored on fishers' active and effective participation in decision making, leveraging on the improved capacities to deepen engagements with members and other stakeholders, and improve the internal structures and workings of the association to be able to perform effectively and efficiently.

#### For more

##### Canoe and Fishing Gear Owners Association of Ghana (CaFGOAG)

<https://www.cafgoagghana.org/>

##### Creating synergies in Ghana's small-scale fisheries

<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/projects/marine-fellows/fellows-directory/2023/ifesinachi-okafor-yarwood>

##### Fisheries Committee for West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC)

<https://fcwc-fish.org/>