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SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROJECT (SFMP)

GREATER-ACCRA REGION TRADITIONAL LEADERS ENGAGEMENT MEETING ON IMPROVED FISHERIES REPORT



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Friends of the Nation

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ACRONYMS

BCC	Behavior Change Communication
GARHC	Greater-Accra Regional House of Chiefs
FoN	Friends of the Nation
SFMP	Sustainable Fisheries Management Project
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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FORWARD

As part of the Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP), FoN organized a one day meeting for traditional leaders from coastal fishing areas in the Greater-Accra Region on **Thursday 1st February, 2018 in Accra.**

This meeting was participated in by five Paramount Chiefs and the representative of a sixth; and six Paramount Queenmothers and a representative of a seventh other participating.

The meeting was designed to bring firmly into fisheries governance the chiefs and queenmothers, whose traditional role it was but has gradually been relegated to the background and chief fishermen propped up. In governance and maintenance of law and order, and also promotion of culture and socio-economic well-being of the people, the chiefs' and queenmothers' efforts compliment that of the central and local government.

In the past, Traditional systems were very effective in promoting compliance of local and customary laws/ bye-laws in local communities including fishing communities in Ghana. However currently, One of the major challenges in Ghana's fisheries sector is Weak Governance, in that there is low participation of key stakeholders especially, local fisher and traditional leaders.

In an attempt to address this issue, this traditional leaders' meeting was organized. It was an important platform to share and discuss the National Fisheries Management Plan (NFMP); and also explore deeper grounds of working with Traditional leaders along the coast to improve fisheries governance through the drafting of Traditional Leaders' charter on Fisheries with a five member working group formed at the end to draft the Charter.

The goal of the five-year USAID-Ghana SFMP is to rebuild targeted marine fisheries stocks through the adoption of sustainable fishing practices and exploitation levels. With a focus on small pelagic fisheries management along the entire coastal stretch of Ghana, the SFMP seeks to rebuild a fishery, which is near collapse. More than 100,000 metric tons of high quality low-cost animal protein that was traditionally available to poor and vulnerable coastal and inland households has been lost. SFMP is also contributing to the GOG's agriculture and fisheries development goals and the USAID's Feed the Future (ftf) development objectives to reduce poverty and hunger.

Though the SFMP is about contributing to resuscitating Ghana's fisheries, managing the fisheries is actually about managing people efforts by Friends of the Nation (FoN) and partners to bring to fore the drivers of CLaT and propose actions that will contribute to a clean, and sustainable fisheries for now and the upcoming generations.

OBJECTIVE

Friends of the Nation organized a meeting aimed at facilitating the active involvement of traditional leaders in sustainable fisheries management. The exercise was therefore designed to kick-start a traditional leaders' action to contribute to bring sanity in the almost "free for all and law-less" fishery practice.

The drawing of the Charter as cited in the forward will be a guiding principle for traditional leaders' involvement in Fisheries Governance. The aim is to promote the use of traditional and customary approaches to improved fisheries governance.

This charter will also contribute to address the weak governance in the fisheries sector and promote sustainable fishing for the benefits of over 13,500. Direct fishers and over 2million people who indirectly demand on fisheries for their livelihood.

The culture and traditional practices, of communities influence the fishery practice therein, as well as the operations of the landing beach. The authority of the traditional leadership (Paramount Chief and his direct official functionaries) in maintaining firm authority along the beach is indirectly relegating power to the chief fishermen.

Oftentimes, one hears some chief fishermen saying "Nana is chief over the land and I am chief over the sea" forgetting that the landing beach is part of the land, and also that fish caught in the sea is always meant for human consumption, or destined for the market and these humans or markets are based on land.

With the firm acknowledgement of the roles of the "traditional chiefs", and "queenmothers" vis-à-vis the role of the chief fishermen (*and also chief farmers for that matter*), it is clear that the chief fisherman just like his colleague the chief farmer is subservient in authority to the stool: more so as the paramountcy is gazetted under the Regional and National Houses of Chiefs but not the Office of the Chief Fisherman.

Traditional leaders need to be facilitated to live up to their traditional roles in providing strong leadership in their areas of traditional jurisdiction to compliment the efforts of government in bringing law and order, and socio-economic improvement and well-being into the communities.

The SFMP seeks to build on gains and lessons learned by the USAID/Ghana Integrated Coastal Fisheries Governance initiative (ICFG) to scale up the latter's successful model for improving law enforcement effectiveness; and extend the Geographical Information Systems (GIS) capacities from the Western to the Central Region (CR) Coordinating Council (RCC), and nine district assemblies (DAs) in the CR.

1.0 OPENING SESSION

1.1 PRESENT

1. Nene Atsure Benta - Paramount Chief, Prampram Trad. Council;
2. Nene Abram Akuaku - Ningo Traditional Council;
3. King Tackie Adama Latse - Ga Mantse;
4. Osonya Nii Adzei Kraku VI - Paramount Chief, Tema Traditional Council;
5. Nii Kinka Dowuona IV - Paramount Chief, Osu Traditional Council;
(President of the G/Accra Regional House);
6. Nii Afotey Botwe II - Representative of Chief of Nungua.

-
7. Naana Kabukour Dagajo Dumaley I - Paramount Queenmother, Ada Trad. Council
 8. Naana Dugbakuwor Dugba II - Paramount Queenmother, Ningo Trad. Council;
 9. Naa Osaabu Abbey - Paramount Queenmother, Prampram Trad. Cncl;
 10. Naa Dedei - Rep. of Ga Manye;
 11. Naa Koteitso Afrasomanso -
 12. Naa Afipong - Paramount Queenmother, Jamestown;
 13. Naa Dede Kumah II - Tema Traditional Council.

-
14. Nathan Daquah - Registrar, GARHC, Dodowa;
 15. Nii Armah Akitikpo - Tema Traditional Council;
 16. Joseph Annang Adoly
 17. Richmond Martey - Prampram Traditional Council;
 18. Nii Ago Tackie-Komme - Ga Traditional Council;
 19. Abraham Narteh
 20. Kanor Dagojo
 21. Nii Ayi Atopla - Nungua Traditional Council;
 22. Nii Odai Annang - Nungua Traditional Council;
 23. Donkris Mevuta (Mr.) - Executive Director, Friends of the Nation
 24. Kwame Mensah - CARE International, Accra
 25. Mr. Kwadwo K. Yamoah (Mr.) - Programs Manager, Friends of the Nation;
 26. Edward Kojo Taylor (Mr.) - Friends of the Nation, Takoradi;
 27. Mr. Kwesi Johnson (Mr.) - Friends of the Nation.

1.2 WELCOME STATEMENT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - FRIENDS OF THE NATION

The meeting started at 10:00am with an opening remark by Donkris Mevuta (Executive Director of Friends of the Nation). He said FoN in partnership with USAID-SFMP have designed the program aimed at all the traditional leaders of paramountcies that encompass the coastal fishing areas in the Greater-Accra Region with the goal to come out with necessary strategies and techniques to improve upon the fishing industry in total.

He mentioned that this meeting was the last in the series (already been held in the Western, Central and Volta Regions). It is aimed at facilitating the creation of a Charter that they would work with after the meeting.



Fig. 1 – Donkris Mevuta giving the welcome statement.

2.0 PRESENTATION BY SOCRATES APETORGBOR, USAID-SFMP

Globally, 1 billion people in developing countries depend on fish for their primary source of protein, yet the sector is over-exploited, as poor management and illegal fishing makes it hard for fishermen to feed their families.

In Ghana for example, about 135,000 fishermen witnessed a 40 percent decline in fish harvest in the first decade of the 21st century. The economic loss from poor fisheries governance and management amounts to \$50-100 billion each year worldwide.

As populations continue to expand, and more and more people demanding for fish as the first choice protein intake due to its cheapness, regulations needed to be enforced, and better still voluntarily complied with to prevent the industry from further resource degradation, rehabilitate over-exploited stocks, and manage overall fishing effort levels.

Specifically, Ghana’s Marine Fisheries Management Plan is a strategic framework for reversing the declining trend of fish resources and establishes a sound management regime to ensure that fish stocks were exploited sustainably in an enhanced environment.

One of its management interventions is the “**closed season**,” which places ban on fishing periodically to decrease pressure on the stocks and allow fish to regenerate during spawning season and replenish the marine environment.

As per the plan, the Fisheries Commission will collaborate with chief fishermen in the fight against **illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing** (IUU), and impose hefty penalties on offenders to deter others.

The plan also makes room for establishment of **Marine Protected Areas**, all in the bid to turn back the clock against some of the damage done. The creation of social intervention programs in the coastal communities and capacity building initiatives so that during closed seasons, the

fishermen would be engaged in other diversified livelihood activities such as salt production and eco-ecotourism.

The issue of fishermen becoming destitute in their old age, sickness, or in the case of losing his equipment in the event of accident, insurance has been factored into the NFMP to cater for such unforeseen but real probabilities in the sector.

Fisheries management succeeds better when there is voluntary compliance vis-à-vis enforcement (coercion); therefore the issue of self-policing through collaborative management (co-management) activities is also considered in the plan with Citizens' Watch (watchdog vigilante) groups proposed in the plan.

According to Socrates, "many things going on but we should see what is profitable. In former times we used to catch a lot of fish but not anymore. A lot of people are into fishing (both males and females and it offers livelihoods for all of us throughout the country and it is the cheapest source of protein and nutritional benefits.

Fishing affects both children and It adults. There are different types of fleet. Fishermen are asking that if a moratorium is laid on building of more canoes, what happens to others who want to join. Women are making big loses as fishermen continue to beach almost zero catches. Civil servants and educated persons can have options but what about fishermen? They depend and know solely about fishing. It is only when the last fish is caught that before we will regret.

One extra day (**additional holiday**) may not be enough to halt the decline but it must be scientifically backed (timing, net sizes etc etc as several things have come together to contribute to the decline".

2.1 Questions, Comments, Contributions, Clarifications

- Queenmother of Jamestown – the act of trawlers who come to areas that they should not go but catch fish and even sell to other local artisanal fishers must be critically looked at and perpetrators penalized adequately to serve as deterrent. She continued that "we cannot continue to allow these foreigners pillage our waters with impunity to the detriment of us citizens" she concluded her comment.

"The so-called "China China boats" are all registered in the in the name of Ghanaians, therefore they are technically Ghanaian", Socrates explained.

- Queenmother of Jamestown again opined that the extra day (additional holiday) to Tuesday must not be imposed but voluntary.

Socrates explained that the literature explains the situation and points out what will happen if we all don't come to consensus. Scientists cannot request for the change in custom. This must rather be spearheaded by the traditional leaders.

All across the nation along the coast, there is consensus that an extra day must be added but the issue is consistency.

- Nii Adzei Krakue said the research is correct but other issues like poor sanitation are also contributory factors to the decline. Waste is dumped at the shore and in the sea wantonly he said. Sanitation issues must be critically tackled as it is playing a major role in the decline of fisheries in the country.

Socrates said the clean beaches pass a good message that there is healthy fish (hygiene). However, government alone cannot do it all.

- Nii Adzei Krakue pitched in another suggestion for diversification of socio-economic activities along the coast. He added that in the past, we worked with others to stablish beach soccer tournaments (as an alternative to fishing). That initiative must be revisitedhe opined.
- The President of the GARHC - Nii Kinka Dowuona said drains that empty into the sea must be sieved and constantly desilted so they don't pollute the sea too much. "Let's remember that the sea brings out the rubbish we throw into it. Why should we allow our beaches to be made dirty and polluted? We must use our custom to fight waste in the sea.

Collaboration has unfortunately led to some people becoming "tin Gods" within the assemblies.

The Ministry of Interior and the Chieftaincy and Local Government are what we the traditional authorities deal with, Nii Dowuona said. He therefore requested that possibilities for integrating the activities of fisheries with other relevant agencies must be explored.

- "Fisheries is actually a governance issue which must be dealt with as such in collaboration with all stakeholders. The Commission must be representative. Only one direction is targeted at the expense of all others. We have laws but it does not work. Fishermen have the right to take decisions but it must have blessings of the Traditional Authorities", added Donkris Mevuta.
- Nii Ga said "We need to be proactive to engage the assemblies as they are living on our lands. We the traditional leaders must be serious. We must involve the Chief Fishermen; but we the traditional leaders must be empowered to effectively engage the Chief fishermen – empowerment as to understating well the issues of fisheries. USAID-SFMP FoN must also engage the traditional councils too – it will also help to engage a wider section of the community and consumers to empower them.

3.0 OVERVIEW OF THE SFMP; AND THE NATIONAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PLAN – KYEI YAMOAHA

Kyei talked about SFMP and the roles of the partner organizations. He talked about the objectives of the project (explained what the poor fishing methods are) drew analogy of the forestry (ban on hunting). He concluded his presentation with an expose on the National Fisheries Management Plan (NFMP) and what stakeholders and traditional leaders can do.

3.1 SFMP and its Project Objectives

The Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (USAID-SFMP). The goal of the project is to rebuild targeted marine fish stocks that have seen major declines in landings over the last decade, particularly the small pelagic fisheries that are important for food security and are the mainstay of the small-scale fishing sector.

It is led by the Coastal Resources Centre of University of Rhode Island with a consortium of partners tasked with an integrated suite of activities including:

1. Improved legal enabling conditions for implementing co-management, use rights, capacity and effort-reduction strategies;
2. Improved information systems and science-informed decision-making, and
3. Increased constituencies that provides the political will and public support necessary to make the hard choices and changed behavior needed to rebuild Ghana’s marine fisheries sector.
4. These components feed into applied management initiatives for several targeted fisheries ecosystems.



Fig 2: Kwadwo Kyei Yamoah engaging the traditional leaders

The National Fisheries Management Plan

We need traditional leaders to be actively involved in the process. We must explore traditional and customary approaches to implement fisheries governance.

Much of what is in the NFMP had already been dilated on by Socrates. However, it is critical to mention that voluntary compliance is key to achieving the objectives of the plan.

- Fear of imminent collapse;
- Over capitalization and subsidies;
- Inappropriate and unsustainable fishing practices;
- “Race to catch the last fish”

3.3 Unsustainable Methods Fishermen Employ

- Use of “bad” nets (green plastic nets). This net which is also called mono-filament nets gets torn in the sea and causes “ghost fishing” (leads to the rotting of fishes trapped in). The fishermen claim if the government think the use of such nets isn’t good then they should provide a better one for them.
- Canoes on the sea beaches are over populated leading to conflict at the coastal areas. Fisheries Law Act 462 states that every vessel (canoe, boat, trawler etc.) at the sea shore should get a license. He went on to say that a new boat is being built every day without being licensed.
- Too many nets which are also too large by far are cast into the sea therefore sweeping everything in their path.
- Industrial fleets competing with the artisanal fishers (coming into areas reserved locals, destruction of nets etc.).
- Weak enforcement (inadequate numbers of personnel and resources).
- Offence not easily corrected (numbers on canoes are hidden by covering them with nets; use of light in fishing; use of generator in fishing; the use of chemicals in fishing; pair trawling in fishing etc.).

According to Mr Kyei, the fishing industry started declining after the year 1950-1998. The “saiko” business (trans-shipment) between trawlers and locals is rife. It is currently happening at Elmina, Apam, Sekondi and Axim. Fishing in Ghana is now in the danger zone and the brink of collapse due to the unsustainable practices by fishermen.

3.4 Questions; Comments; Clarifications

- Queenmother of Jamestown raised concern about registration of canoes for a fee.
- Nii Kinka Dowuona also added that “as we are thinking of cutting down the number of fishermen, the marine fish aquaculture must also be promoted side by side that effort. We must think of fisheries as bread and butter issues”. He recommended that the project meet with the whole Regional House; Traditional Councils; and communities to take their views. He concluded by saying the laws must be monitored because the trawlers are a menace to the industry.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

In the past, traditional systems were very effective in promoting compliance of local and customary laws/ bye-laws in local communities including fishing communities in Ghana.

However currently, one of the major challenges in Ghana's fisheries sector is weak governance, in that there is low participation of key stakeholders especially, local fishers and traditional leaders.

In an attempt to address this issue, this traditional leaders' meeting organized on February 1st 2018 for coastal chiefs and queenmothers in the Greater-Accra Region will compliment what has been done in the other three coastal regions of Ghana.

The meeting facilitated the creation of an important platform to share and discuss the National Fisheries Management Plan (NFMP). It also explored deeper grounds of working with traditional leaders along the coastal stretch of the country to improve fisheries governance through the drafting of Traditional Leaders' Charter on Fisheries which a five-member working group was formed at the end of the meeting to work on.

The Charter which's aim is to promote the use of traditional and customary approaches to improved fisheries governance, when completed will serve as a guiding principle for traditional leaders' involvement in Fisheries Governance. It will also contribute to address the weak governance in the fisheries sector and promote sustainability of the sector for the benefits of over 13,500 direct fishers, and over two million people who indirectly depend on fisheries for their livelihood.