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# SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROJECT (SFMP)

## Volta Region Traditional Leaders Engagement Meeting on Improved Fisheries Management (NFMP and Fisheries Legislation)



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THE  
UNIVERSITY  
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Friends of the Nation

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**Cover photo:** Participants attentively listening to FoN's Executive Director (Credit: Friends of the Nation)

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## **ACRONYMS**

ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African Countries
FoN	Friends of the Nation
IUU	Illegal Unreported Unregulated
NFMP	National Fisheries Management Plan
SFMP	Sustainable Fisheries Management Project
VMS	Vessel Monitoring Systems

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## **SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION**

On 10<sup>th</sup> May 2018, a meeting was organised under the Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP), to engage traditional leaders in the Volta Region. The meeting was facilitated by Friends of the Nation (FoN), one of the key implementing partners of the SFMP. The traditional leaders included Chiefs and Queen mothers from the Volta Regional Traditional Council. A total of 54 persons participated, including 44 Males and 10 Females.

### **1.1 Workshop Objectives**

The objective of the workshop was provide the platform to engage traditional leaders, including paramount chiefs and paramount queen mothers on the National Fisheries Management Plan (NFMP) and the Fisheries legislation.

### **1.2 Expected outcomes**

Expected outcomes of the workshop included:

- Knowledge of traditional leaders on the NFMP and Fisheries legislation improved
- Platform created for traditional leaders to discuss fisheries issues, especially the NFMP and other fisheries legislations

## **SECTION 2 OPENING STATEMENTS**

This section presents statements that were delivered at the commencement of the meeting.

### **2.1 Statement from the Executive Director of Friends of the Nation (FoN)**

The Executive Director of FoN, Mr. Donkris Mevuta opened the meeting with a reminder that some of the traditional leaders attended a meeting in Takoradi which looked at some legislative review of the fisheries sector. He added that this engagement is not just an event but an on-going process to engage traditional leaders in fisheries governance. ‘We are poised to help in rebuilding the marine fisheries stocks and we will not like to exclude traditional leaders’, Mr. Mevuta informed the participants. He explained that this is so because it is an issue of livelihood and food security. He hinted that the maiden meeting informed participants of the existence of a fisheries management plan. This meeting is therefore meant to deepen the engagement to look at what the illegalities and the legalities are. As it stands, we can’t blame anyone, Mr Mevuta mentioned, explaining that some of the laws may shock the participants who are hearing it for the first time, to the point that they may oppose but the reality is, that is the existing law. Nonetheless, he informed that there is an ongoing review. Which he implored those who were present at the Takoradi meeting to share what transpired there.

Concluding his remarks, Mr. Mevuta mentioned that ‘as we engage in fisheries governance we expect you to engage the media (radio) appropriately. He implored them to use the opportunity to become transformational leaders in fisheries governance to eventually contribute to food security.



**Figure 1 Mr. Donkris Mevuta, Executive Director of FoN, delivering his opening remarks**

## **2.2 Statement from Volta Regional Director of the Fisheries Commission**

Mr. Nii Amponsah, the Volta Regional Director of the Fisheries Commission pronounced that there is total disconnect between chief fishermen and the traditional leaders which in effect is contributing to improper fisheries governance. He cautioned that should something go wrong in a fishing community the chiefs would be held responsible hence the need for collaboration and proper involvement in fisheries agenda. Let us all come together to promote good fisheries governance and good practices on the sea. He agreed to the facts that there is the need for effective laws about fisheries practices and the need for chief fishermen to show respect to traditional leaders.

Reminiscing previous engagements on legislative review, he informed participants that there have been very interesting discussions, which considered review of the fisheries laws. As at now, he hinted that he is not certain of traditional authorities' participation in fisheries governance in the legislation. Hence the need for chiefs to take charge. Mr. Amponsah concluded by advising participating traditional leaders to increase their knowledge on the fisheries laws admonishing them to have copies of the laws.





**Figure 2 Volta Regional Director of Fisheries, Mr. Nii Amponsah, addressing the participants.**

### **2.3 Peer Sharing of matters arising from a legislative review meeting in Takoradi**

Two leaders, one Queen mother and one chief shared briefly the matters that were discussed at the Takoradi meeting

#### **Torgbui Gbordzor**

We have learnt that the traditional authorities should play their role in fisheries governance. They have talked about additional fishing holiday, which will go a long way to help the fisheries industry. The use of light to attract fish and the subsequent use of dynamite to disable and capture the fish was also discussed and fish processors were also given the opportunity to share their views.

#### **Mama Ayaba II (Queen mother)**

We suggested that the sanction of offenders have not been severe enough to deter fishers from engaging in illegal fishing. We also said that foreign vessels are not adequately monitored. They engage in so much illegal activities and go unpunished. There was a general agreement that enforcement of the fisheries law is weak.

#### **Comments by the house**

The information they shared generated a quick discussion amongst the participants. Below is a summary of the comments that came up.

Torgbui Samallafo III: We asked the delegation to ask what the authorities are doing to stop the use of monofilament nets in our Volta marines. Mama Ayaba II responded by saying such concern was carried across and they were informed that the use of monofilament net was illegal. Torgbui Zewu IV added that it was explained that the monofilament net was made for

use in the riverine. Fisheries commissions' director explained that the fisheries commission used to grant permit but now the commission is no longer issuing permits. He indicated that after some few months if anybody is found using monofilament net, then it should be noted that such net probably had been smuggled in. He further added that the monofilament net is sometimes used for fencing farms and gardens and the commission could be sued if they refused to sell the monofilament nets to prospective buyers. Torgbui Baku IV recommended that the activities of industrial vessels should be checked. They should not be allowed to fish within the inshore zone. If such regulation is strictly enforced then local IUU can equally be controlled. Concluding the comments, they agreed that it's necessary for the chief fishermen to collaborate with the traditional leaders for it was about time the traditional authorities were empowered to help enforce the laws.



**Figure 3 A Queen Mother sharing the lessons she learnt from previous legislative review engagements**

## SECTION 3 PRESENTATION ON NFMP AND THE FISHERIES LAWS



**Figure 4 Mr. Kyei Kwadwo Yamoah delivering a power-point presentation**

Mr. Kyei Kwadwo Yamoah took the participants through a detailed session focusing on information in the NFMP and the fisheries laws. He did this using power-point presentations. It was an interactive session which allowed participants to ask questions or seek clarity in the course of the presentation. Discussions were encouraged while the presentations were on-going.

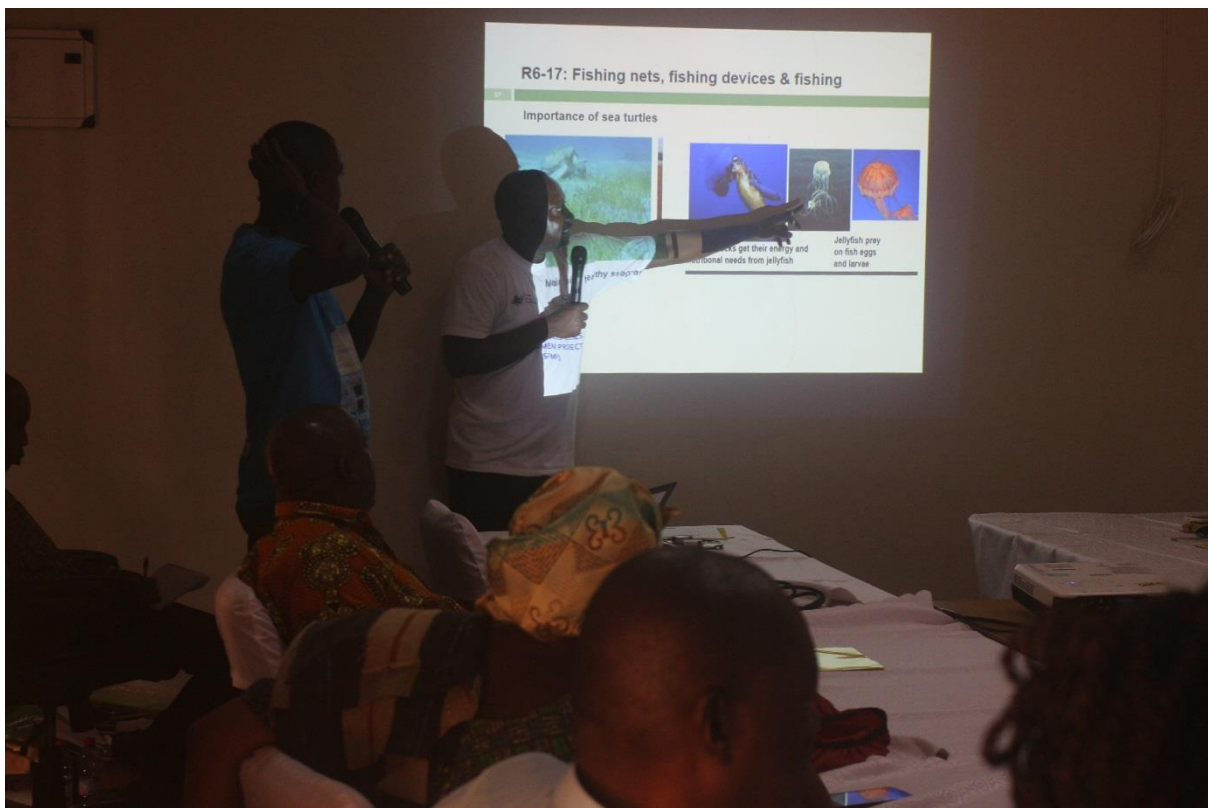
In his presentation, Mr. Yamoah hinted that on prohibited fishing methods, section 88 of the fisheries act 625 is the parent law the presentation would touch base with the addition of some few sections. He elaborated that Section 88 says nobody should use any explosive, poison or other noxious substances for purpose of killing etc, or in any way rendering fish more easily caught. As a result, he advised that the law is clear and says no one should carry such substances within a 2 km radius with the beach as the reference point. He cautioned saying ‘do not have it in your possession especially for the purpose of fishing. If you are found with these things, the law says you should be fined 250,000 dollars or 500 penalty units’

Mr. Yamoah also pronounced the regulations which look at the inland sector. Fishing across an inland way or setting of fishing gear across an inland waterway to obstruct navigation is illegal, he informed. The law also says do not use bamboo to trap or harvest fish - It is illegal because it traps juvenile and gravid fish, he added. On mesh size, he explained that the monofilament nets must not be used in the marine but can be used in the riverine, but even that it must be 3 inches. Do not use drag nets and beach seine nets in estuaries and MPAs. For beach seine, the sack must not be less than 1 inch, since this harvests juvenile fish.



Hinting on other aspects of illegalities, Mr. Yamoah informed that the law also prohibits fishing around oil and gas installations. He went further to discuss sea turtle conservation and informs that the law prohibits the capture and eating of sea turtles and their eggs. All nets must therefore have turtle exclusive devices, he advises. He used the opportunity to educate participants on the importance of Sea turtle. They feed on jelly fish, he hinted. The jelly fish feeds on small fish and eggs. The sea turtle also act as grazers (farmers) and keep the sea bed clean. If the population of the Jelly fish increases, then it means sea turtle population is down.

On some other Illegal Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing activities, Mr. Yamoah informed that dumping of fish is prohibited unless authorized. He added that the law also gives measurement for fish sizes. For example, Cassava fish must not be less than 7 inches. Anchovies must be 2.4 inches in length. Switching off of Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS), Poaching, transshipment, etc. are all prohibited by law, he informed. He stated that Ghana's fisheries has declined. This is the reason why the NFMP is being implemented to prevent the collapse of the fishing industry. Additionally, the law is being reviewed. This provides an opportunity for us to add our voice and make our inputs, he concluded.



**Figure 5 Mr. Yamoah explaining a slide on fishing nets, fishing devices and fishing. Next to him is an interpreter who explains English into Ewe and vice versa**

## SECTION 4 COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Below are some comments and recommendations participants mentioned during the meeting.

- A Meeting should be organised between Chiefs and Chief Fishermen. It is ideal for each group to be told of their limits in relation to the laws.
- There should be instituted, a community fishing police to inspect, monitor and ensure compliance with the law.
- Customs must be engaged to stop the importation of illegal fishing gears (including nets) into the country
- Government should stop the importation of Sardines because, they are not of the required sizes
- Fish needs no passport to travel', hence there is the need for collaboration with countries in the ECOWAS region.
- There is the need to take steps to reduce political interference
- Chiefs should demand accountability from chief fishermen.
- There is the need for sustainable structure to find space for traditional leaders to be backed by the law to act
- The NFMP should consider not only the marine sector but the inland as well

**Figure 6 Recommendations from participants**