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The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative



FEED THE FUTURE GHANA FISHERIES RECOVERY ACTIVITY

FISHERIES CO-MANAGEMENT TRAINING REPORT

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Feed the Future Ghana Fisheries Recovery Activity
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COVER PHOTO: Cross section of Fisherfolk in Anomabo during Fisher-to-Fisher dialogues deliberating on fisheries management measures enshrined in the Fisheries Management Plan (2022-2026). Photo credit: GFRA, 2022.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CBFMC	Community-Based Fisheries Management Committee
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
F2F	Fisher-to-Fisher
FC	Fisheries Commission
FSSD	Fisheries Scientific Survey Division
FMP	Fisheries Management Plan
FMOOC	Fisheries Management Operational Committee
GFRA	Ghana Fisheries Recovery Activity
GoG	Government of Ghana
ICFG	Integrated Coastal Fisheries Governance
LaBEC	Landing Beach Enforcement Committee
MOFAD	Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development
MPA	Marine Protect Area
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
STC	Scientific and Technical Committee
STWG	Scientific and Technical Working Group
SFMP	Sustainable Fisheries Management Project
TOR	Terms of Reference

BACKGROUND

Ghana's fisheries provide livelihoods for over three million Ghanaians, and directly employ over 140,000 fishers across the four coastal regions¹. However, the main fisheries are currently overharvested by both the artisanal and industrial fishing sectors. Scientific data on annual landings of the small pelagics (round sardinella, flat sardinella, chub mackerel and anchovy) from the Fisheries Scientific Survey Division (FSSD) in 2019, revealed a decline to the lowest levels in the time series between 1990 and 2019. The round sardinella is considered collapsed, due to low landings recorded in 2019 (Lazar et al. 2020). The decimation of Ghana's small pelagic fish stocks has resulted in the imminent collapse of these fisheries, threatening national and local food, nutrition, and livelihood security throughout Ghana and its neighboring countries.

The current state of Ghana's fisheries can be attributed to weak governance of the resource including weak fisheries resource management, centralized and insufficient participatory decision-making process, and ineffective and inconsistent enforcement coupled with widespread acceptance and use of destructive and illegal fishing methods. In its attempt to resolve the decline of the fisheries resources, the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (MOFAD) have introduced co-management arrangements through the adoption of the 2020 Co-Management Policy which will help to address the main challenges faced by the fishing sector that affect the livelihoods of millions of Ghanaians, as well as the resources that they depend on.

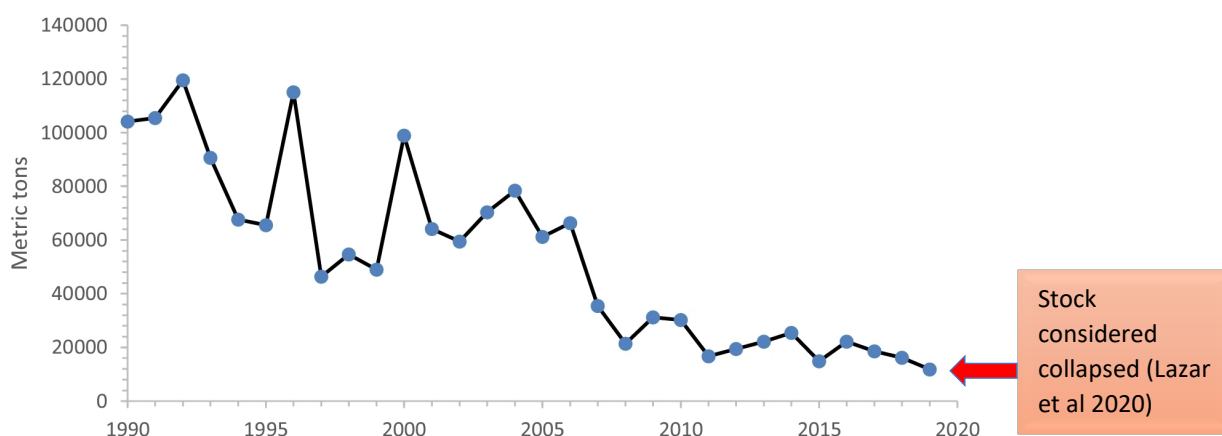


Figure 1 Status of the *Sardinella aurita* (Lazar et al, 2020²)

There has been a change in the approach to resource governance in Ghana over the last few decades, with the establishment of the Community Based Fisheries Management Committees in

¹ Fisheries Commission. 2020 Annual Performance Report

² Lazar, N., Yankson K., Blay, J., Ofori-Danson, P., Markwei, P., Agbogah, K., Bannerman, P., Sotor, M., Yamoah, K., Bilisini, W. B. (2020). Status of the small pelagic stocks in Ghana in 2019. Scientific and Technical Working Group. USAID/Ghana Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP). Narragansett, RI: Coastal Resources Center, Graduate School of Oceanography, University of Rhode Island. GH2014_SCI083_CRC. 17 pp

1997, which recognized the participation of fishers and resource users in shared decision-making.

Co-management is a set of arrangements with different degrees of power sharing that allows for joint decision-making by the state and resource user groups over access to and use of a defined set of resources or area³. The FAO also defines it as a partnership arrangement between government and the local community of resource users, sometimes connected with agents such as NGOs and research institutions, and other resource stakeholders, to share the responsibility and authority for the management of a resource⁴.

Co-management is accepted globally as a best practice for fisheries governance and management. Fishers and other resource users are empowered to participate in governance decision and become active members in the management of fisheries resources. This allows resources users like fishers to bring a balance to the rights and responsibilities of fisheries management and work in partnership with government. Co-management increases ownership of management initiatives by resource users and increases voluntary compliance of fisheries regulations and the adoption of responsible fishing practices because of this shared responsibility⁵.

The success of any fisheries management depends on effective collaboration between policy makers, resource users and traditional authorities coupled with direct recognition, alignment, and engagement of the local community authorities. The GFRA provides a unique opportunity to build on and learn from previous co-management investments and progress made to address critical threats, including the USAID Sustainable Fisheries Management Project and other initiatives.

HISTORY OF FISHERIES MANAGEMENT IN GHANA

Fishermen in Ghana have long observed traditional or customary approaches to support the conservation of their fisheries stocks. Often, these approaches directly involve community leaders and traditional authorities in restricting access to marine fisheries. Throughout the coast of Ghana, fishermen observe a one-day per-week non-fishing day and use this time to repair nets, boats, resolve conflicts in their fishing communities, and address other pertinent issues related to their livelihood. In this way, traditional fishing holidays are seen as part of a community's socio-cultural practices rather than as a direct fisheries management tool.

Some Ghanaian fishing communities observe a ban on fishing activities for about two weeks before annual festivals. This ban can be either on a specific fish species or a total ban on fishing prior to the festival. Chief fishermen, as the traditional leaders of fishing communities, perform rituals that precede festival-related fishing bans. In other communities, long held cultural beliefs

³ Berkes, F. (2009). Evolution of co-management: Role of knowledge generation, bridging organizations and social learning. Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba, 70 Dysart Road, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3T 2N2, Canada. *Journal of Environmental Management* 90 (2009) 1692–1702

⁴ <https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/topic/16625/en>

⁵ Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (2020) Co-Management Policy for the Fisheries Sector, Government of Ghana pp41

guide how local communities interact with their coastal resources. For example, in the Volta Region, communities believe that polluting the beach is disrespectful to the gods and polluters will be cursed by not landing any fish. Fishermen and other stakeholders in coastal communities fully comply with these traditional rules as they dare not defy the gods and traditions of their ancestors. Communities also fully respect the key role of traditional authorities in setting these fishing rules and as a result, would continue to respect their role in more formal fisheries management processes such as policy formulation and implementation of best fisheries management practices.

More recently, the concept of fisheries management has evolved from these traditional regimes led by chiefs and community leaders to a centralized governance regime led by national fisheries managers such as the Fisheries Commission⁶. Even though customary fisheries management practices and systems are still recognized, especially by local communities, there was no devolution of power to these communities in the management of fisheries.

CO-MANAGEMENT IN GHANA

Starting in 1997, under the World Bank funded “fisheries sub-sector capacity building project”, Ghana initiated steps to implement co-management actions, creating 133 Community-Based Fisheries Management Committees (CBFMCs) along Ghana’s coasts. However, these institutions failed due to a lack of sustained funding to support the committees, lack of technical support, unclear maritime jurisdiction of the committees and no legal recognition of the role and authority of chief fishers and committee enforcing fisheries rules. The failure of this initial attempt at fisheries co-management resulted in a reversal to a centralized command-and-control decision making process (USAID/ICFG 2013).

Through continuous support from USAID, Ghana has finally embraced the concept of co-management in the fisheries sector. Three community-based co-management initiatives were piloted during the USAID Sustainable Fisheries Management Project, coupled with several multistakeholder engagements across all levels of the fisheries value chain, from community to national levels. This led to the 2020 development and adoption of a Co-management Policy for the Fisheries Sector, which provides the needed framework and legal backstopping for the implementation of co-management in the fisheries sector.

The policy identifies several levels of co-management arrangements ranging from the community level to the national level. It aims at divulging fisheries management authority from the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development and the Fisheries Commission to co-management committees at the national and community level for the sustainable management of the resource. Decentralization of fisheries management provides hope for effective, transparent, and inclusive management of Ghana’s fisheries, the lack of which has contributed to the near collapse of the resource.

⁶ Solving the Fisheries Crisis in Ghana: A Fresh Approach to Collaborative Fisheries Management. 2013. USAID-URI Integrated Coastal and Fisheries Governance (ICFG) Initiative. Coastal Resources Center, Graduate School of Oceanography, University of Rhode Island. 20p

Building on from the experience and lessons learned from SFMP, GFRA is supporting the Government of Ghana, through MOFAD and the FC, to establish and formalize several co-management arrangements to facilitate the recovery of Ghana's small pelagic stocks. Following the Co-Management Policy, these arrangements allow for co-management at the national level as well as at the community or site level. The national level committees allow for large-scale management of the small pelagic stock, a stock that spans Ghana's coastline and extends into Togo and Cote D'Ivoire. These include the Scientific and Technical Committee (STC), the Fisheries Management Operational Committee (FMOC), and the Small Pelagic Co-management Committee. At the community or site level, GFRA has initiated work towards reinvigorating or establishing Landing Beach Enforcement Committees (LaBECS) through the Eyes on the Water Program.

This report will introduce and summarize GFRA's process to date in supporting MOFAD and the FC in its efforts to establish two national co-management committees, the STC and the FMOC. The government is prioritizing these two as they are essential for the successful implementation of the new Fisheries Management Plan as soon as it has been accepted by Parliament. GFRA progress to date on the LaBECS will be reported in the companion Eyes on the Water Report.

SCIENCE AND TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

The Co-management Policy for the Fisheries Sector mandates the Fisheries Commission to establish a Scientific and Technical Committee (STC) to function as an advisory panel to the Commission and its Co-Management Committees in accordance with existing Fisheries Laws.

The STC is a scientific committee with an overarching mission to provide science-based management advice to the Fisheries Commission, which assures long-term sustainability of fish stocks based on the best available scientific information. The STC strives to advance scientific assessments that can guide fisheries managers in making fisheries management decisions and improve communication with stakeholders to promote best fishing practices.

Members of the STC will carefully examine existing fisheries data collected by the Fisheries Scientific Survey Division (FSSD) and other fisheries related studies to improve understanding of the status of various fish stocks and establish practical indicators to monitor fisheries management performance measures toward a healthy and sustainable state. It will also consider, where applicable, Indigenous fisher knowledge and experience during the formulation and the development of management measures and recommendations. It will serve to address the legal requirements of the Fisheries Act of 2002 (625/42 – I(a)), which requires fisheries management plans to be developed using the best available scientific information. The STC will be formalized under the authority of the Fisheries Commission for the development, collection, evaluation, and peer review of information relevant to fisheries management.

The STC builds on the successes of the Scientific and Technical Working Group (STWG), which was established under SFMP. Lessons from the establishment of the STWG, which was an independent and ad hoc group, has guided GFRA to ensure that the Fisheries Commission leads in the formation of the Committee. GFRA has worked collaboratively with the FC to develop a

draft Terms of Reference (TOR) for the formation of the committee, in line with the Co-management Policy. Once formed, GFRA will provide technical and logistical support to the Fisheries Commission to operationalize the Committee. Even though the Co-management Policy provides the legal backing for the establishment of the committee, GFRA will also work with the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development and the Fisheries Commission to ensure that the upcoming revision of the Fisheries Act, Act 625, includes specific recognition of the committee as an advisory committee for the Commission.

Core Functions

The STC functions include:

- Assess the status of key fish stocks that are economical of national importance, including the large and small pelagics and demersal stocks.
- Make determinations on the status of fish stocks.
- Set target reference points for biomass and fishing mortality to end overfishing.
- Make recommendations to the Fisheries Commission and other national level co-management committees, such as the Fisheries Management Oversight Committee (FMOC), concerning management measures that are needed to rebuild stocks that are overfished and prevent overfishing of stocks that have not yet been fully exploited or underexploited.
- Assist Fisheries Commission with independent fisheries data analyses as and when needed.
- Conduct a peer-review process to validate the final assessment of fish stock and adopt biological indicators for the purpose of monitoring management performance.
- Review existing fisheries stock assessment models, identify gaps, and propose a series of research recommendations for their improvement as well as the impacts of management measures.
- Assist fisheries managers and stakeholders in understanding the impacts of each management measure on the biological, social, and economic well-being of the fishery.
- Report on the fisheries' performance and assess expected responses to short- and long-term management scenarios.
- Review Closed Season assessment reports and make recommendations to guide the implementation of subsequent closures towards the recovery and sustainable management of Ghana's marine fishery.

Membership

The STC members will have skills, knowledge, and experience in the fishing sector and in the conservation and management of fisheries resources. Such skills will include expertise in marine biology, ecology, oceanography, and socioeconomics. Members of the STC will serve for a term of three (3) years and cannot serve for more than two terms. They will be selected from nominees proposed from the organizations shown in the box to the right, and with the advice and consent of MoFAD and FC.

Members of the STC will vote and elect its chair at the first meeting. The Chair will ensure a fair representation of input from all members and oversee the proceedings of the

Representation on the STC will include representatives from the four main fisher associations in the marine fishing sector, the four divisions of the FC, the MOFAD, Academia, and CSOs

Committee. The FSSD, which plays the role of a Secretariate for the Committee, will function as co-chair. The head of FSSD or its representative will lead the proceedings and represent the STC in the absence of the Chair.

All members of the STC shall serve without compensation and shall be reimbursed for their necessary expenses incurred in travel and in the performance of their duties

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT OPERATIONAL COMMITTEE

The Fisheries Act, 2002 Act 625 Section 2.2 mandates the Fisheries Commission to prepare and keep under continuous review a plan for the management and development of fisheries under the jurisdiction of Ghana. It further directs per Section 42 (1) that the Plan shall be based on the underlined principles of:

- a) Best scientific information available;
- b) Optimal utilization of the fishery resources; and
- c) Good management practices.

Section 42 (3) of Fisheries Act 2002 (Act 625) also requires that “The Commission shall be responsible in collaboration with such state agencies as the Commission considers appropriate for the implementation of a fishery plan”. Subsequently, Section 9 also grants that “The Commission may appoint committees it considers necessary for the implementation of its functions”.

The draft Fisheries Management Plan (2022 – 2026) highlights the significant role of an Operational Committee as key to effective and efficient implementation of the plan. It therefore calls on the Fisheries Commission to facilitate the formation and formalisation of a Fisheries Management Operational Committee (FMOC) as an Advisory Committee to the Fisheries Commission.

The FMOC is an independent multi-stakeholder committee with an overarching mission to provide advice to the Fisheries Commission in the implementation and review of the fisheries management plan. The FMOC employs the principles of co-management to build trust and improve governance of marine fisheries by providing a platform for transparency and increased stakeholder involvement in the formulation and implementation of fisheries policy.

Thus, the FMOC strives to promote inclusivity, ownership, responsible fishing practices, and voluntary compliance with fisheries management measures for the sustainable management of Ghana’s fishery resources. Relying on scientific input and advice from the Scientific and Technical Committee (STC), the FMOC will provide recommendations to the Fisheries Commission to guide the effective implementation and development of current and future Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs).

The Committee will critically assess the status of the implementation of actions as captured in the fisheries management plan and provide guidance to the FC to ensure successful implementation of the plans. The careful evaluation and assessment of key actions against identified indicators will ensure efficient monitoring of the performance of the FMP. FMOC members will provide timely updates on actions implemented to their respective constituencies

to guide annual reviews and improvements on the management plan, especially as advancements in knowledge and management are made during the period of implementation.

Even though the 2015-2019 Fisheries Management Plan of Ghana was developed with in-depth stakeholder inputs, its rollout was undermined by the lack of any structure to provide oversight, allow for feedback from those affected by the Plan, and ensure effectively and timely implementation of agreed actions. This resulted in a lack of ownership of initiatives enshrined in the plan and mistrust from stakeholders in their involvement in the implementation of fisheries policies. Having identified this shortfall, the FC has prioritized the formation and formalization of the FMOC as key to effectively implement the new FMP (2022-2026). The establishment of the committee will provide an opportunity for the fishers to actively participate in policy formulation and implementation, thereby promoting ownership. It will also promote transparency and trust between fishers and government, hence strengthening collaboration in the implementation of the fisheries measures enshrined in the plan.

GFRA has supported the FC to develop a TOR for the establishment and operationalization of the FMOC. Once formed, it will work with the Commission in the development of annual operational plans to guide the implementation of the FMP (2022-2026).

Core Functions

The FMOC functions include:

- Develop annual Operational Plans and/or Implementation Guidelines based on emerging trends and lessons learnt to ensure effective implementation of fisheries management plans.
- Incorporate recommendations from the STC concerning management measures needed to rebuild and manage declining stocks.
- Contribute to the development of financial plans for the implementation of activities.
- Develop key performance protocols for effective monitoring, evaluation, and annual review of the FMP (2022 – 2026).
- Contribute to the development of a communication plan for the socialization of the FMP.
- Improve inter-sector collaboration and coordination for efficient implementation of actions outlined in the FMP.
- Initiate the process of developing new fisheries management plans after the expiration of the existing one.

Membership

The FMOC members must have skills, knowledge, and experience in the fishing sector and in the conservation and management of fisheries resources. Members of the FMOC will serve for a term of three (3) years during the implementation period of the FMP. They will be selected from nominees proposed from the organizations shown in the box to the right and with the advice and consent of MoFAD and FC.

Members of the FMOC will vote and elect its chair at its first meeting. The Chair will ensure a fair representation of input from all members and oversee the proceedings of the Committee. The quorum for the meeting should be at least five-member institutions of the Operational Committee.

Representation on the FMOC will include representatives from the four main fisher associations in the marine fishing sector, the four divisions of the FC, the MOFAD, Academia, CSOs, Ghana Maritime Authority and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Secretariat

The MFMD, will provide secretariat services to the Committee through support staff. These will include drafting agendas, recording/ reporting, and circulation of relevant material & minutes. The head of MFMD or its representative will function as co-chair and may lead the proceedings and represent the FMOC in the absence of the Chair.

CONCLUSION/NEXT STEPS

The Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development eagerness to champion the implementation of the Co-management Policy provides a strong enabling environment for GFRA to succeed in strengthening existing co-management units while creating new ones. Their willingness to oversee the devolution of powers to fishers, in support of the management of the fishery, provides the platform for participatory fisheries management, which has the potential to lead to sustainability of management actions.

The two key co-management structures currently under development, the STC and FMOC, provide the foundation to build grassroot support and strengthen constituencies needed for hard but effective management decisions that support the recovery of Ghana's fisheries. The committees provide unique opportunities to fill the knowledge gap while equipping fisher associations with the requisite skill set to engage and educate their membership. It enhances timely and effective communication between resource users and decision makers while improving collaboration at the community level.

The FC has committed to form both committees by the end of June 2022. GFRA will then guide these committees to develop action plans to achieve their mandate. GFRA also plans to provide leadership training for committee members, to help the committees in conflict identification and resolution.

Another key co-management structure that the Government of Ghana is keen to establish and anchored on the FMOC is the Marine Protected Area (MPA) Committee. GFRA will support the government in the establishment and effective functioning of this committee as well.

Activities from the STC and the MPA Committee will guide the FMOC in the development of annual operational plans for effective monitoring and evaluation of the Fisheries Management Plan (2022-2026).

After these national co-management committees are established and have developed clear action plans to guide their activities for the coming year, GFRA will also engage the FC in the creation of other site level or community co-management units that support these national co-management committees in the implementation of management actions to recover Ghana's small pelagic fisheries.



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