

FEED THE FUTURE GHANA FISHERIES RECOVERY ACTIVITY (GFRA)

Lessons Learned Report on Supplemental Livelihood Program for Youth in Fisheries



November 2023



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Feed the Future Ghana Fisheries Recovery Activity

Report on Lessons Learned after the first year of implementation of supplemental Livelihood Program for Youth in Fisheries.

November 2023

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COVER PHOTO: Selected Trainees with USAID, GFRA and OICG officials at the graduation event in Takoradi on September 26th, 2023.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACHF	Alpha Communication and Health Foundation
APS	Annual Program Statement
CCC	Creators Computer Clinic
CTVET	Commission for Technical Vocational Education Training
EAfM	Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management
SRH/FP	Sexual Reproductive Health and Family Planning
GFRA	Ghana Fisheries Recovery Activity
MCP	Master Crafts Person
MOFAD	Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development
OICG	Opportunities Industrialization Centre, Ghana
SFMP	Sustainable Fisheries Management Project
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
TVET	Technical and Vocation Educational Training
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ghana's fishery sector contributes to national economic development objectives relative to employment, livelihood, foreign exchange earnings, food security and poverty reduction. The sector is estimated to employ about 2.8 million (10 %) of the country's population from fishers to fish processors to countless other livelihoods along the fisheries value chain. Fisheries is also an important and nutritious food sources for the country, supplying Ghanaians with 70% of their protein intake. Unfortunately, the last two decades have seen a drastic decline in the volume of marine fish landings due to unsustainable and illegal fishing. As a result, the wellbeing and livelihoods of coastal communities are risk, given their dependence on fisheries as the main driver of economic activity. In addition, many of the measures that need to be taken to recover the small pelagic fisheries will require a reduction in fishing effort or capacity, both of which will be difficult to implement unless fishers and coastal communities are less dependent on fisheries for income.

To alleviate these challenges, USAID designed the Feed the Future Ghana Fisheries Recovery Activity (GFRA) with the goal of mitigating the near collapse of Ghana's small pelagic fisheries sector and establishing a durable basis for its ecological recovery. Strategic Approach 1 seeks to align fisheries capacity with ecological carrying capacity of the small pelagic fisheries while enhancing the socio-economic well-being and resilience of artisanal fisherfolk. This requires intentionally introducing supplementary livelihoods that can complement their fisheries related income earning potential and gradually encourage a shift away from fisheries livelihoods and towards other economic enterprises. By targeting young male and females working in the fishing sector, GFRA aims to catalyze a generational shift that will ease fishing pressure and also diversify economic opportunities for coastal communities.

After conducting a thorough analysis of interest levels and barriers to youth in the fisheries sector and examining the results of other livelihoods and workforce development programs across Ghana, GFRA designed and launched its supplemental livelihoods program in late 2022, recruiting 1350 young fishers into various livelihood training options based on the unique profile and characteristics of each applicant. Trainees can choose from between a long-term (3-12 months) training option, a short-term (1-5 days) training option, and the option to become a trader in consumer goods. Trainees in all three options receive extensive counseling and mentorship before, during, and after the training to anticipate and address challenges that might lead to recidivism or not taking up the livelihood after the training. Trainees also receive support to address key financial barriers that might hinder participation and uptake of the new livelihood, training on financial literacy and entrepreneurship to support their ability to manage person finance or those of their microenterprises, and access to finance through participation in Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs).

This report examines the experiences of the first year of implementation of the livelihoods program and presents an analysis of the factors that supported or hindered successful achievement of the programs' ultimate objectives. These include informing the strategy through the thorough assessment into the unique circumstances that face fishers and the fisheries sector in Ghana and using that to design a bespoke livelihood training program that would ensure uptake and ultimate adoption of the new livelihoods. It also includes providing fishing youth with livelihood options that suit their competencies and working through a grantee whose experienced staff helped to hone GFRA's strategy to implementing the supplemental livelihoods program.

Some challenges encountered in the first year of the project's implementation include the low interest shown by the male youth to take up new livelihoods outside of the fishery and the initial lack of cooperation and commitment of leaders of fisher associations.

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

I.1. Background

The Feed the Future Ghana Fisheries Recovery Activity (GFRA) is a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded initiative with the goal of mitigating the near collapse of Ghana's small pelagic fisheries sector and establishing a durable basis for its ecological recovery while enhancing the socio-economic well-being and local resilience of artisanal fisherfolk and their communities. GFRA activities are being implemented under an overarching framework using an ecosystem approach to fisheries management (EAFM) inclusive of relevant strategic interventions to collectively achieve GFRA's five interdependent strategic approaches:

1. Strategic Approach 1: Align fisheries capacity with ecological carrying capacity of the small pelagic fisheries while enhancing the socio-economic well-being and resilience of artisanal fisherfolk.
2. Strategic Approach 2: Increase the quality and value of artisanal fish products to maintain household income and enhance availability of nutritious foods for local and regional markets.
3. Strategic Approach 3: Strengthen transparency, accountability, and co-management in governance practices for fisheries policymaking, regulation, and enforcement.
4. Strategic Approach 4: Strengthen constituencies to promote and implement sustainable fisheries management.
5. Strategic Approach 5: Improve use of science and research for policy and management decisions.

Under Strategic Approach 1, GFRA seeks to align fishing capacity with the ecological carrying capacity of the small pelagic fisheries while enhancing the socio-economic well-being and resilience of artisanal fisherfolk by supporting the employment transition and capacity development of youth in fisheries into livelihoods outside of the fishery. This component followed the successful implementation of a 7-month pilot of livelihood interventions under the USAID funded Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP). Through GFRA, USAID originally aimed to reach 3500 fishers with new livelihood options however expanded the project's scope in July 2023 to extend the reach to a total of 8000 fishers. This report summarizes the results to date under this strategic approach, documents lessons learned over the last two years, and presents recommendations for the expanded phase of livelihoods programming under GFRA in the last three years of the project.

I.2 Objective

The Ghana National Youth Policy (2010) defines youth as those populations between the ages of 15-35 years. According to the 2021 Population and Housing Census, an estimated 73 % of the country's population are under 35 years with an unemployment rate of 7.14%.

Ghana's fishery sector contributes significantly to the nation's economic development objectives relative to employment, livelihood, foreign exchange earnings, food security and poverty reduction. The sector is estimated to employ roughly 2.8 million or 10% of the country's population. Traditionally, fishing is done by men while fish processing and trade is predominately done by women. For young people living in fishing communities, nearly all available economic opportunities depend directly on the fishery sector. While fishing, the men form a crew of captain and fishermen. Women and a few male fish traders and processors start their "careers" as helpers or laborers, working for their mother, aunt, or sometimes someone outside of their family. Other jobs for youth in the fisheries value chain include head porters, hustlers, washmen, cleaners, fuelwood log splitter, water carriers and fish "descalers".

The decline in fish stocks has put the livelihoods for coastal communities at risk. In addition, many of the measures that need to be taken to recover the small pelagic fisheries will result in either a reduction in

fishing effort or fishing capacity, both of which will be difficult to implement unless fishers and coastal communities are less dependent on fisheries for income.

To address these challenges, GFRA seeks to meaningfully engage youth in coastal communities actively engaged in the fishing sector, and between the ages of 15-35 in learning and adopting new supplemental livelihoods. The goal is to support employment transition and capacity development of youth in fisheries to reduce their economic vulnerabilities in the face of dwindling fish stocks and to support the introduction of fisheries management measures by the Government of Ghana. Ultimately, the adoption of these supplemental livelihoods will support a generational shift away from fishing in Ghana's coastal communities, further reducing fishing effort and fishing pressure.

SECTION II. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

2.1 Supplemental, Not Alternative, Livelihoods

To develop a successful strategy for introducing and sustaining supplemental livelihoods among coastal youth, during the first year of the project GFRA undertook a thorough Market Analysis¹ to identify livelihood options that are financially and socially suitable for fisher youth. The Market Analysis sampled and interviewed 424 fisher youth (40% female and 60% male) from 15 coastal communities across Ghana's four coastal regions (Volta, Greater Accra, Central, and Western Regions). While conducting the Market Analysis took several months, it was an extremely useful tool to understand the unique characteristics and interests of young fishers, identify their preferred livelihood options, and have a better understanding of why so many of livelihood interventions targeting the fishing sector had failed in the past. Only 19% of those interviewed engaged in supplemental livelihoods while the remainder confirmed that fishing is a deep-rooted culture for coastal peoples in Ghana and that it will be difficult to convert fishers to an alternative livelihoods in the short term. Fisherfolks do recognize that fish stocks have dwindled yet maintain hope for their recovery and expect the government to intervene. At the same time, reduced catches have affected fishers' incomes, leading to increased interest in a secondary source of income. In conclusion, young fisherfolk are eager to adopt non-fishery livelihoods for the additional income but are not ready to completely abandon their fisheries related economic activities. These findings led GFRA to design a livelihoods program to introduce supplemental livelihoods, rather than alternative livelihoods, with the hope that these supplemental livelihoods may, over time, become their full-time employment in the face of dwindling stocks and management measures that restrict fishing activities.

2.2 Identifying Livelihood Options

The Market Analysis provided GFRA with a strong foundation to select trades that are preferred by and more appropriate for fisher youth. These include trades in the construction sector such as block laying, tiling, plumbing, electrical installation and repairs, and welding and fabrication, auto mechanic and consumer electronics repairs and trades and services such as tailoring, detergent production, hair dressing, cosmetology, food catering, and consumer goods trading. These trades also match the existing skill sets among fisher youth, who have been engaged in fisheries related activities from a young age and frequently have low literacy levels. The livelihoods must generate frequent income earning opportunities as fishers are also accustomed to instant income, either after each fishing trip for fisherman or market day for fish processors and traders. Most importantly, the supplemental livelihood must generate income equivalent to or exceeding the incomes participants are generating in the fishing sector, especially for long term adoption. According to the 2021 Canoe Frame Survey, the average fisher earns an average monthly income of GHS 1,680 (GHS 210 per fishing trip with an average of 8 trips per week). Table 1

¹ [Market Analysis of Suitable Alternative and Supplemental Livelihoods in Coastal Regions of Ghana](https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00ZCGV.pdf) or https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00ZCGV.pdf

presents the potential monthly incomes of the selected livelihoods as of October 2023, to demonstrate parity or the potential increase in earnings when employed in these trades as opposed to an average fisherman's income.

Table 1: Potential Income from Supplemental Livelihoods

Trade Area	Potential Monthly Income (GHS)
Plumbing	1,492
Electrical Installation and Repairs	1,888
Masonry	1,230
Metal Welding and Fabrication	1,886
Window Glazing	1,946
Floor and Wall tiling	1,490
Auto Mechanic	1,885
Garment Making	1,460
Bakery/Cookery	2,330
Hair dressing/Hair braiding	1,163
Cosmetology	1,235
Repairs of Consumer Electronics	2,310

Source: Salaryexplorer.com, as of October 2023.

2.3 Alignment with Existing Youth Focused Skills and Employment Initiatives

Concurrently with the Market Analysis, GFRA extensively consulted stakeholders and institutions involved in skills training programs for youth to ensure alignment with other workforce development initiatives, especially those prioritized by the Government of Ghana. With an eye to long term sustainability, GFRA also assessed the possibility of collaboration. These included the Ghana Enterprise Agency's Youth Africa Works Project, the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ)'s Migration and Employment Promotion (MEP) programme under the Program for Sustainable Economic Development, and the Commission for Technical and Vocation Training (CTVET) and its Technical Vocation Education Training (TVET) Voucher Project with funding from GIZ under the Ghana Skills Development Initiative. While of these programs target Ghanaian youth, interestingly none were operating in coastal communities or specifically responding to the unique characteristics of the fisheries sector. GFRA also consulted the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (MOFAD) regarding their Aquaculture for Food and Jobs initiative, which does target youth groups in communities but is not ideal for young fishers due to the huge startup capital required to initiate aquaculture ventures in Ghana.

GFRA ultimately decided to align the livelihood program design with the CTVET support for competency based technical training, assessment, and certification. As described more fully under the Long-Term Training section below (2.5), the competency-based traditional apprenticeship model implemented by CTVET is ideal for both literate and non-literate fishing youth and allows them to receive National Proficiency certifications under the National TVET Qualification Framework.

2.4 Addressing Financial Barriers

The Market Analysis indicated that respondents are willing to pursue new livelihoods but identified four significant financial barriers that affect their interest, commitment, and uptake of those livelihoods. The first is the payment of training fees which are often prohibitively expensive because these youth and their families have little savings. Apprenticeship fees in particular are unaffordable because they require large payments that fisher youth do not have. The second is the cost of acquiring basic tools that are necessary for the training to learn or practice a certain skills or trade, for example sewing machines for those in garment making. The third barrier is a daily cost of living stipend to cover food and other costs that are incurred while an individual is training and not earning an income. This is especially important for fisher youth who are already accustomed to earning an income, no matter how small, and find that

opportunity is blocked because of the amount of time spent in a longer-term training program. The final barrier is access to finance to invest in capital investments required for the new trade or business after the training period is over and throughout the first years of the individual engaging in that new livelihood. This is exacerbated by the fact that fisherfolk have a poor savings culture and have little or no relationship with financial institutions. This includes, at a minimum, purchasing the start-up equipment needed to pursue a new livelihood or trade.

GFRA's livelihood strategy provides a moderate amount of financial support for three out of the four barriers – the basic tools and equipment for training, start-up kit, and training fees – while also ensuring that trainees are investing their own resources into their future livelihood to demonstrate their commitment and need to take up a livelihoods. GFRA made this decision based on feedback received from other livelihood programs, which found that when participants were given full financial support there were negative repercussions to long term commitment to the new livelihood. GFRA also decided not to provide the cost of living stipend in order to ensure trainees were still providing some personal financial commitment for their livelihood training and future business ventures. GFRA also assumed that some trainees are still earning an income while participating in their training program as they might continue their work in the fisheries sector while not in training.

GFRA initially planned to establish a \$100,000 revolving fund to provide livelihoods trainees with low-cost loans up to \$100 for business investments upon successful completion of their training. The concept was that an initial group of livelihoods trainees, up to 500, would receive the first round of loans. As these loans were repaid, then the funds would replenish for an additional 500 trainees to receive loans every year or more. GFRA conducted extensive scoping with formal and micro-finance institutions and with projects offering financing in other sectors such as USAID's Mobilizing Finance for Agriculture to inform the establishment of such a fund. GFRA also explored the financial products offered by rural banks for startup enterprises and how they could be extended to the livelihood beneficiaries and whether they could hold the seed fund in trust for GFRA. After this scoping exercise, GFRA made the decision that establishing a revolving loan fund for livelihoods trainees would not be feasible. Unfortunately, the combination of high interest rates and fishers' lack of collateral meant that the formal banking sector is out of reach for many poor young fishers. Meanwhile, GFRA realized that while a revolving loan fund capitalized at a total of \$100,000 seems like a generous pool for fisherfolk livelihoods trainees, in reality it is a small amount of loan financing. The small loans would necessitate high transaction costs that would require high service fees given that fishers are located in remote areas with no formal banking services. The analysis demonstrated that these fees would eventually consume the entire capital amount over time. Given these constraints, GFRA decided to abandon the plan to establish a revolving fund and directly provide trainees who have successfully completed their skills training with the essential start-up equipment and goods needed to stimulate their new business or trade. These are given with the understanding that the goods will also complement the trainee's own savings which will be invested in other business start-up costs. The start-up equipment and goods complement the provision of tools and goods that each trainee receives at the start and utilize during the course of their training.

To ensure that trainees have the option of saving some of their earnings and also have access to financial resources for future investments, GFRA also provides all youth participating in the program with the opportunity to join Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs). VSLAs are a proven informal financing mechanism in Ghana for low income individuals who are not able to access finance in the formal financial sector. Membership in a VSLA can improve business outcomes for individuals starting new enterprises or trades by imparting fiscal management skills and the savings functions also prevent a gradual decline of their working capital due to other household commitments. VSLAs also support trainees to build a savings culture and in term invest their savings or access the VSLA credit to expand their businesses when needed. The Market Analysis clearly indicated that most coastal youth are familiar with rotating savings schemes, where a group of individuals come together to save, and that they would be very comfortable participating in a VSLA.

2.5 Tailored Approaches to Participant Skills Training

GFRA's supplemental livelihoods program is designed around three categories of training and skills building: long term skills training (3-12 months in duration), short term skills training (1-5 days in duration), and trading. GFRA selected these three categories based on the Market Analysis, which indicated that fishers needed a range of livelihood training options that are tailored to their needs. Some were not willing to dedicate lengthy periods of time to training and needed something shorter term, others were willing to put in the dedicated time in order to learn a new skill. Finally, others were more interested in doing something immediate without learning new skills, such as trading in goods, but lacked the financial literacy and business management skills needed for that livelihood. It should be highlighted that youth between the ages of 15- 18 years are required by law to be enrolled in the formal education system. Thus, for all potential applicants under 18 GFRA has to make referrals to formal educational programs. If the applicant has a Basic Education Certificate and wants to learn a skill, GFRA can refer them to a local technical training institution under the Government's TVET program. If the individual does not have a Basic Education Certificate, then they are told to wait until they are 18 to participate in the GFRA livelihoods program.

2.5.1 Long term skills training

GFRA's long term skills training program has a training duration of 3 to 12 months, depending on the trade. Trades such as plumbing can take up to 12 months while trades such as cosmetology and hair braiding can be learned in 3 to 4 months. The main trade areas targeted under the long-term skills training program are electrical installation and repairs, plumbing, garment making, cosmetology, floor and wall tiling, bakery and cookery, auto mechanics, carpentry, and masonry.

GFRA designed an innovative approach to long terms skills training and mentoring by adapting the CTVET's competency-based traditional apprenticeship model. Under the traditional apprenticeship model, the trainee pays an agreed fee to a Master Crafts Persons (MCP) to be trained over a three-year period. The MCPs are local artisans who have acquired and practiced their skill over a long period of time and have the capacity to train others. Under the traditional model, a trainee spends the first year running errands at the work site; the second-year training through hands on mentoring by the senior apprentice, and only the final year is dedicated to honing skills with the MCP. For fisher youth accustomed to earning regular incomes and with serious household responsibilities, a three-year apprenticeship is near impossible. Thus, GFRA designed an informal apprenticeship approach with a shorter duration and provides financing to pay the MCP's fee for each trainee over the 3–12-month period.

Under GFRA's long terms skills training program, MCPs are intentionally selected based on a set of criteria including availability of space and equipment at their workshops, high interest level in participating in the informal apprenticeship concept, strong educational background, and reputation for high quality products or services. All selected MCPs are then trained in the approved TVET curriculum for their trades. They then use a training plan based on the TVET curriculum to guide their transfer of knowledge and skills to their trainees. This approach facilitates regular monitoring to determine the competency level of the trainee in the trade area at any point during the training calendar. In addition to the technical training, all GFRA supported MCPs are also trained in important soft skills such as Adolescent Management, Conflict Management, Basic Methods for Instruction and Workshop Management. This is to ensure that in addition to technical skills training, MCPs can also manage the apprentices and provide some limited coaching.

After a short orientation, the livelihoods participants are attached to MCPs in or near their communities. The skills training takes place at MCP workshop sites with technical, hands on training courses using real life or simulated projects. Often, MCPs are a familiar face for trainees in their communities and they do not have to travel and incur extra costs that might become a barrier to sustained participation. GFRA also provides all trainees with basic tools and consumables needed as teaching aids or to practice their

trades. These include sewing machines and accessories for those in garment making; utensils, flour, butter, and milk for those in cookery and bakery; pliers, cutters, cables, and screw drivers for those in electrical installation and repairs. Some trainees also require personal protective equipment such as goggles, safety boots, or overalls to prevent injuries or for certain trades and are trained in their use as part of the instruction.

In the last month of their technical skills training, GFRA holds bridging sessions to determine the readiness of each trainee to apply the skills they have acquired and tailor post training interventions to ensure their success. These are one-on-one interactions tailored to each trainee where project counselors receive feedback from trainees on their successes and challenges during the training period and determine whether apprentices have achieved the learning outcomes of the program or competency standards that would make them eligible for the intended qualification. The counselor assigned then works with the MCP to provide additional support for trainees who may have some challenges during their last month of training. For trainees who do not want to stay in wage employment but want to start their own enterprises, GFRA also provides additional mandatory mentoring and coaching.

Post training support is just as important as support during training. For trainees who have an 80% attendance rating and have completed the skills training, they can choose to take the TVET National Proficiency I examination with all fees supported by GFRA. This exam is the first level in the National TVET Qualification Framework, and it is a unitized and outcomes-based qualification that creates access to further education, training, employment, and self-employment opportunities for the youth. Acquiring the Proficiency I Certificate allows the trainee to improve their prospects of seeking new opportunities outside of their community and into formal employment with the capacity to increase their income by 30% more than those who do not acquire the certificate. As mentioned above, some excelling graduates are also provided with startup equipment and tools to invest in their trade or business. Finally, a key component of post training support is weekly follow up visits by grantee community facilitators for six months after graduation to support the trainee with mentoring and troubleshooting as they start up their new livelihoods.



Figure 1. Trainees with their PPEs and basic tools

2.5.2 Short term skills training

This is skills training with a duration of 3 days for participants who are willing to learn a new skill but do not have the competency or the capability to do so due to their low aptitude or family commitments. The skills areas targeted for this training are the production of household detergents and flour confection because these are household items in high demand in fishing communities. Trainings are organized by GFRA at the community level and during the training, participants are introduced to health, safety, and hygiene protocols before they are taught to identify ingredients for product formulation, learn how to make the products, and then are taught methods for packaging, storage, and marketing.

After the skills training, all trainees are provided with start-up kits (valued at GHS 1,000) comprised of chemicals to formulate products, packaging bottles and labels, and production equipment such as mixing bowls and ladles to enable them to produce their first batch of products for sale. Trainees also receive monthly mentoring sessions over a four-month period after the training to addresses any challenges they may have on the formulation of products, bottling and labelling them appropriately to meet the standard required by the Food and Drugs Authority so they can sell them on the open market. Once trainees sell their first batch of products, they then generate the income to continue producing and selling their products.



Figure 2: Training on the production of bar laundry soap



Figure 3: Display of products made by trainees



Figure 4: Trainees making flour confection (poloo and puff puff)

2.5.3 Trading

Fish trading is a common livelihood in fishing communities across Ghana and has taught some youth important trading skills. In order to capitalize on these existing skills and accommodate interested youth who cannot commit time to skills training, GFRA designed a trading livelihood option that emphasizes trading in non-fishing items. This is particularly of interest to young female fishers who have young children and no childcare options. Trainees in this category are offered training in psychosocial counseling and financial literacy and entrepreneurship before they are provided with a set of start-up goods such as toiletries, food items and household goods. They also receive bi-weekly mentoring by GFRA to ensure that they are keeping records for their businesses, to track their progress on sales and to support reinvestment of profits of their goods.

2.6 Ensuring Capacity Building in Financial Literacy and Entrepreneurship

The Market Analysis highlighted that learning a new skill or trade was not the only capacity building that potential livelihoods participants needed. Equally important are skills in financial literacy and

entrepreneurship needed to manage money, access finance, save profits for future investments, and manage a business. Thus, GFRA integrates training on Financial Literacy and Entrepreneurship into all three of the training options mentioned above. For trainees in long term skills training, topics such as marketing, customer service, importance of savings and cash management and record keeping are introduced every quarter as part of the TVET curriculum. Trainees in the trading and short term skills training options, all of whom will likely to start small businesses, receive a one day training dedicated to entrepreneurship and enterprise formation, marketing of goods, customer and client service, record keeping, accessing, and managing credit, and personal financial management. GFRA developed a standard curriculum to guide these trainings and all trainings are provided through a mix of classroom training and hands on simulations and expected to build the capacity of these youth to manage their micro enterprises profitably.

SECTION III: RESULTS AND LESSONS LEARNED FOR THE FUTURE

As summarized in Table 2, by the end of September 2023, GFRA trained 1350 youth across the three categories of training options with 682 of those fully completing their training. Enrollment into the training program is conducted on a rolling basis, so trainees complete their trainings at different times based on when they enrolled and also based on the duration of their training. GFRA recruited 228 MCPs to provide the long term skills training in over 10 trade areas - electrical installation and repairs, plumbing, floor and wall tiling, window glazing, carpentry, auto mechanic, garment making, cosmetology, hair dressing, bakery/cookery and welding and fabrication. After successful completion of the trainings, GFRA supported 100 excelling graduates in the long term training with essential start up equipment and tools and supported 100 traders with a start-up kit to immediately start trading locally in goods such as food and beverages, cosmetics, footwear, sewing accessories and detergents. Additionally, 515 youth enrolled on all three training options were trained in financial literacy and entrepreneurship.

Table 2: Results of livelihood training as of September 30, 2023

Type of Livelihood support	Numbers of individuals enrolled			Numbers of individuals graduated	Number of individuals still in training
	Total	Male	Female		
Long-term training	850	292	558	436	414
Short-term training	400	0	400	146	254
Trading	100	2	98	100	0
Total	1,350	294	1056	682	668

This section of the report summarizes the lessons learned from this first round of trainings and the subsequent shifts made to the livelihoods strategy as a result of those lessons. All of these shifts will also be accommodated in the next phase of implementation.

3.1 Intentional Participant Recruitment and Selection

The Market Analysis Study demonstrated that the ultimate success of the livelihoods program depends, in part, on a rigorous and intentional process to recruit and select participants. GFRA's first set of criteria was to ensure participants were recruited from the 15-35 age group, were residents of a coastal community, and were actively working in the fisheries sector. However, it was also important to ensure that participants were selected based on real need, show a demonstrable commitment to learning new skills, and have the competencies to do so. Recruitment was not easy at first. Potential participants were wary of applying as they had witnessed several other failed livelihoods programs in their communities and were wary of having any benefit from participation that would offset the sacrifice in time and income earning potential. Others were discouraged by leaders of fisheries associations, who worried about their main workforce transitioning to other livelihoods. In order to identify interested applicants, GFRA first focused recruitment efforts through GFRA site level partners Hen Mpoano and Friends of the Nation and through community leaders, Chief Fisherman, and fish processor association leadership who were trusted in coastal communities and could share the information and encourage applications by word of mouth. GFRA also initially timed the recruitment to coincide with the July 2022 closed season assuming that there would be high interest during this period when youth are idle, and the reality of no alternative income had set in. While over 600 youth registered during this period, most and particularly the males, had dropped out by September 2022 when they returned to fishing.



Figure 5: Livelihood recruitment poster

As a result of this experience, GFRA now promotes the livelihoods program all year long using GFRA developed jingles in the 6 languages most spoken along the coast. GFRA plays these jingles three times a day on community radio stations and information centers in fishing communities throughout the year. The jingles are reinforced with posters that provide information on what is required to participate in the program and how interested candidates can register. This gives youth time to process the information and make up their minds on when they want to enroll. GFRA also organized a large public launch and graduation events to celebrate applicants and graduates of the livelihoods trainings, which served to advertise the program and its benefits to prospective applicants. These two events helped to significantly improve the visibility of the project and boosted the self-esteem of the trainees as they realized they were not alone, but part of a bigger ecosystem.

Allegations of sexual misconduct by some livelihood participants during the recruitment and application stage also led to swift adjustments in GFRA's approach to introduce additional safeguards. These safeguards were designed to mitigate unforeseen risks during the recruitment process stemming from individuals within the community having perceived power over the applications submitted by young vulnerable fishers and demanding payment or other remuneration. GFRA swiftly adjusted its livelihood recruitment process to emphasize that no payment in cash or in kind is required or should be made by potential applicants in order to be eligible for selection and enrollment into the program. GFRA also made the decision that only project staff could pick up completed applications from prospective participants, limiting the potential for malicious interference during that critical stage of the process. Finally, GFRA hired eleven community agents located in or near GFRA sites to support the livelihood promotion and recruitment processes. Each community agent has received extensive training on the project's code of conduct and safeguarding mechanisms to ensure they are aware of and can enforce the project's protections for vulnerable groups. These community agents now support the GFRA livelihoods team with the promotion and registration of interested youth, eliminating all third parties from that aspect of the recruitment process. All livelihood promotional posters and jingles now also include a

contact number for anonymous complaints and a disclaimer stating that applications and enrollment into the livelihoods program is free from payment and favors of any kind.

After recruitment, GFRA also designed a rigorous application process that screens individuals interested in participating in the program and results in a list of candidates for enrollment into the various training categories. All interested participants fill out an application form that collects basic information that guides the selection of the new trainees and ensures they are enrolling in the most appropriate livelihood training option. At first, GFRA was accepting applications that were pre-filled by applicants on paper, however due to the large number of inaccuracies applications are now filled out by the applicant with GFRA staff and community agents using Kobo Toolbox, an online software that can be used with smartphones or tablets to collect, analyze, and manage data for surveys, monitoring, evaluation, and research. As a result, the screening can take place during the application processes. With the questions from the application, screeners can select candidates with high commitment, parental consent, appropriate educational level for the choice of livelihood, and can identify those who may come from vulnerable households for additional support. The application also identifies whether the applicant has had prior skills training or apprenticeship experience and why they did not apply that skill. After submission of the applications, the GFRA livelihoods team makes follow up visits to the communities to validate all applicants and confirm that they are indeed engaged in a fishery related livelihood, confirm their age, and ensure that the applicants are committed and ready to start training.

One important lesson GFRA learned during the past year was to reduce the time between registration of trainees and enrolment on the skills program as trainees tend to lose interest, migrate, or engage in other activities. Promotional activities should not be too far off from when processes are initiated to engage a grantee to facilitate the training. This is why the promotional activities and registration of youth are undertaken all year round through community radio, posters, and community agents.

3.2 Incorporating Gender Equity and Social Inclusion

From the start, GFRA designed the livelihoods program to be inclusive of all participants regardless of background, gender, or disability. Training through apprenticeship is a particularly reliable pathway for social inclusion as trainees have time to learn and practice their trade in a hands-on, on-the-job fashion over time. GFRA and its grantees encouraged female youth to overcome prevailing stereotypes and gender barriers to take up trades in male-dominated fields such as metal welding, floor and wall tiling, and auto mechanic. GFRA also provided individuals with disabilities equal opportunity to participate in the program, leading to several hearing and physically impaired students participating in the first cohort of trainees.

GFRA also identified certain fishing households as particularly vulnerable to child labor and trafficking, especially those that are women headed, with large family sizes and living in poverty. GFRA allocated 10% of all livelihood enrollment to youth from these vulnerable households – identifying some to fill this quota from those who had applied and others by working with leaders of fishing communities to intentionally identify youth from households vulnerable to child labor and trafficking. While identifying applicants from vulnerable households was not that difficult, ensuring their enrollment in the program was very challenging. Few of those identified have enrolled and completed their training, including five (5) teenage mothers who now earn income to support their return to school, while feeding for their babies. Others could not be reached on the telephone numbers on their applications forms, relocated to other communities, or simply lost interest in joining the program. It is also clear that these vulnerable youth needed special attention and mentoring during the training period to ensure they remain in the training, given their precarious economic and home situations. GFRA has learnt that, for this category of beneficiaries, payment of stipends is important for their retention in training, as it supplements their daily feeding and commute. Due to budget constraints, there has been no action on this yet. However, GFRA intends to innovate with future cohorts to improve approaches to identify, retain, and support vulnerable beneficiaries.

Another lesson learned from the sexual misconduct allegations was the need to add an empowerment component to the long term training programs to teach vulnerable young women with skills to improve their self-determination and prevent gender-based violence or manipulation. Trainees are provided with individual bi-weekly counselling sessions to shore up their self-esteem and self-confidence and to sustain their interest throughout the training period. There are also group counselling sessions where the beneficiaries are brought together every quarter to discuss issues like drug use, sexual and reproductive health, and self-awareness.

3.3 Working through Experienced Grantees and Subcontractors

Due to the unique characteristics of youth in fishing communities and the large number of individuals enrolled in the livelihoods training, GFRA utilized its Grants Under Contract to recruit organizations with strong experience working with vulnerable youth and demonstrated understanding of the informal skills training sector to manage the skills training options. GFRA publicized an Annual Program Statement (APS) and selected two grantees, Opportunities International Centre, Ghana (OICG) and Alpha Communication and Health Foundation (ACHF), to facilitate the long-term skills training and mentoring of 550 and 300 youth respectively from fishing communities in across Ghana's four coastal regions.

OICG has been a huge resource to the design and implementation of GFRA's long term skills training program. Since its establishment in 1970 as an affiliate of Opportunities Industrialization Centre International, OICG has built a strong reputation as an organization with extensive experience with vocational skills training for youth in Ghana. OICG developed the first Vocational Skills Training and Job Placement Centre for youth in Africa. Its experienced staff supported GFRA to clearly define the long term livelihoods training strategy to achieve maximum success and ensure replicability across a large cohort of trainees. OICG's work has defined the benchmark by which all other grantees are measured. From the start, OICG has integrated financial literacy and entrepreneurship training and civic education to the technical skills training – a strategy GFRA decided to adopt for the future with all grantees to ensure that livelihood trainees are fully functional and ready to manage their own enterprises. Building on these successes, GFRA plans to scale up OICG's engagement on the program, awarding a new grant for OICG to facilitate the long term skills training for 4000 additional youth across the four coastal communities in varied trade areas over the next two years.

For the short term skills training and trading options, GFRA contracted Creators Computer Clinic (CCC), a local company experienced in training on the production of household detergents and flour confection, to facilitate the short-term skills training for 400 youth. CCC was selected for this role based on their successful past experience in training on these same topics in similar communities.

3.4 Continuous Monitoring, Mentoring and Coaching

GFRA has emphasized a tailored and applied approach to monitoring, counseling, and mentoring livelihood applicants in order to address the high risk of dropouts among coastal youth identified in the Market Analysis study. This starts from enrollment, with a special coaching session to help participants select the appropriate trade to learn that matches their interest and ability, overcome obstacles during the training program, and to prevent dropouts. For the long-term training, GFRA also organizes an orientation workshop where participants are briefed on the objectives of the livelihood program, their roles and responsibilities, and asked to sign a code of conduct to guide exemplary behaviors in the apprenticeship, including regular attendance. The



Figure 6: Male youth during a counseling session

participants then have one-on-one psychosocial counseling with trained educational counselors to mentally prepare them for the training and help improve their attitude before they are attached to the MCP. These counseling sessions enable the youth to assess their own competencies, with the support of their counsellor, and to decide on the trade area that matches their skills. After the initial counselling session, trainees receive bi-weekly counseling sessions throughout the training period.

These orientation and counseling sessions are an important mechanism to clarify youth participant expectations for the intended outcomes of the livelihood training upfront, help trainees have a better understanding of themselves, improve attitudes, and ensure participants see how their new skill or trade fits into their life goals and competencies. One interesting outcome from these initial counseling sessions was the need to expand the livelihood options to allow trainees to select trades outside those identified in the Market Analysis as long as there is a MCP in the community who can competently train the individual and there is market demand for that trade.

While the youth are in training, effective monitoring and continuous assessment of their performance is an indispensable component of the success of the program. The MCPs also play an important role in mentoring and counseling their trainees. For example, some MCPs allow trainees who need income to go fishing on some days and make up missed lessons later. Using attendance registers, MCPs record each trainee's attendance. These are cross checked by the grantees to determine if a trainee has been consistently absent and why. GFRA and its grantees undertake weekly monitoring of each training site after the trainees have been attached to the MCPs to ascertain the progress being made by the trainees and address any challenges encountered. At each visit, staff look out for the wellbeing of the trainee, assess the trainee's progress vis-à-vis the TVET curriculum for their trade, confirm the treatment of trainees and their working conditions, evaluate trainees' unique learning needs, and identify additional training for those who are falling behind or at risk of dropping out. These visits are crucial for ensuring trainees' progress and establishing that they are on the right track to attain the required competencies to complete the program. They are also crucial for understanding any underlying reasons for non-attendance and addressing them during the counseling sessions. They also offer an opportunity for project staff to ensure that both the trainer and trainee receive the necessary support during the training period and take corrective measures to prevent or reduce recidivism.

GFRA will continue to monitor the progress of the trainees who have completed their skills training and set up a knowledge sharing network for early adopters of the program. The network will be a platform to bring together alumni of the program in the various communities to share their experiences during the training and the progress they have made since completion. The knowledge shared will be used to adjust the GFRA strategy. The graduates who have successfully taken up new livelihoods will also be assigned to mentor those in training.



Figure 7: Trainees working during a monitoring visit.

As already indicated, the Market Analysis study identified four financial barriers to the adoption of new livelihoods and GFRA accommodated all except for paying a daily stipend to participants during their training period. However, GFRA was committed to revising this approach if it created serious challenges for participants to finish their training. At first, trainees in the long-term training program expressed hesitation and anxiety over the lack of a stipend. However, once they received the set of basic tools for training, they realized that the program was serious about supporting them despite the lack of a stipend. The basic tools not only enhance the trainee's learning outcomes, but they have become an incentive for trainees to complete the training. This is because, for many trainees, the basic training tools represent the first time they have owned an asset. Meanwhile, the lack of stipends has not had a negative impact on the program with only 3 individuals enrolled in the long-term training dropped out due to their inability to support themselves during the training.

Given that most livelihoods trainees have recently graduated, only a few have been supported to access the finance needed to support their new businesses and trades. GFRA provided 100 ex-celting trainees from the long term training with start-up equipment such as sewing accessories for those who completed training in garment making, hair dryers for those in hair dressing and welding machine for those in metal welding and fabrication to mention a few. These trainees were selected due to their high capability to start their own enterprises and employ others. Unfortunately, only about one fifth of those trained could be provided with these resources due to budgetary constraints. However, with the costed expansion of the GFRA livelihoods program, GFRA will now be able to provide at least 80% of trainees in subsequent cohorts with start-up equipment. GFRA does not foresee any challenges with the fact that not all trainees are receiving start-up equipment because not every trainee will be setting up their own business. Thus, GFRA will prioritize those trainee graduates who plan to establish their own business with the start-up equipment.

For those trainees who choose to learn trading as their supplemental livelihood, GFRA was able to provide all of them with a start-up basket of goods for trading, valued at approximately \$100. For those who live in more urban communities such as those in Sekondi in the Western Region and Azizanya in the Greater Accra Region, however, this amount was not sufficient to make a profit due to the high cost of living. This is due, in part, to the continuously rising prices of these goods as a result of the country's economic crisis, which affects the volume of goods they can procure. During the follow up monitoring and mentoring sessions, GFRA engaged in continuous conversations with these youth and decided to increase the value of the start-up basket of goods to \$150 to mitigate the frequent changes in price.



Figure 8: Youth who chose trading as a livelihood option.

Participants of the short-term skills training receive a start-up kit of ingredients that are used for product formulation and packaging. These are used during the training, but participants are also encouraged to market and sell this initial stock of products as a way to capitalize and set up their own enterprises. To date, all participants have been able to sell their household detergents and flour confection products in their communities and are successfully using the income to continue in those businesses.

The establishment of VSLAs has been slow and so far, only 6 VSLAs have been formed for 55 youth who chose trading as their livelihood option. No VSLAs have been formed for the long-term or short-term skills training because most participants were not earning an income while in their skills training, so had nothing to contribute to the VSLA once they graduated. As more trainees complete and graduate, GFRA will scale up the formation of VSLAs and anticipates that 60 groups will be formed in Year 3.

3.6 Inclusion of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Family Planning (SRH/FP) Education

With the support of additional resources from the USAID Health, Population and Nutrition Office, GFRA initiated conversations with Total Family Health Organization (TFHO) to explore opportunities to extend reproductive health and family planning services under their Health Marketing Activity (HMA) to coastal fisheries communities, especially those participating in the livelihoods program. This was because of the large number of livelihoods participants who struggled with adopting a new livelihood because of the burden of caring for children, especially the youth who started families at a young age. A GFRA vulnerability assessment on child labor and trafficking also pointed to large family sizes as a major contributor to child labor among fishing communities.

GFRA began collaborating with HMA to integrate sexual and reproductive health and family planning topics (SRH/FP) into the long-term livelihoods trainings. These lessons are tailored for young people, enabling them to have autonomy over their reproductive health. Grantee field officers first received training on the SRH/FP modules to then conduct training sessions for MCPs who can provide guidance and advice on SRH/FP to their apprentices. Clinical service providers from the community then provide bi-monthly counselling and education to the trainees over a six-month period, information that is reinforced by the MCPs with trainees during their daily interactions. It is important to note that, at each visit to a Master craftsman's shop, all apprentices available at the shop benefit from this SRH/FP education session, whether they are participants of the livelihood program or not. The trainees are awarded a badge upon completion of each module after undergoing a verbal knowledge assessment with a scorecard as a guide. For sustainability purposes, the trainees will be recognized as FP champions after they have completed all three modules, to keep the SRH and family planning conversation ongoing within their communities and among their peers. Over time, family planning champions will have the options to vend family planning products, along with delivering client-services and education.

The introduction of SRH/FP into the livelihood programme is an innovative way to address barriers to supplement economic benefits with self-empowerment and better health outcomes.

3.7 Challenges Recruiting Male Participants

To date, only 21% of all livelihood beneficiaries trained are males. Young males have been particularly reluctant to enroll in skills training due to their fear of loss of income for the period they are in training. Traditionally, females in fishing communities tend to spend more of their income on feeding and caring for their families while men tend to invest in assets for the family. Thus, women are more eager to seek supplemental income for use by the household. Young male fishers are also more likely to migrate to other communities during lean times to seek new opportunities or take on menial jobs to earn extra income. During closed seasons, some male fishers migrate to Togo and Liberia to continue fishing to make up for the loss in income. Finally, many males adopted a "wait and see" attitude to the GFRA livelihood training opportunities after negative experiences with previous alternative employment projects that made promises but never delivered. As mentioned previously, when GFRA provided basic tools to trainees it created additional demand as potential trainees perceived the basic tools as an indication of GFRA's commitment to truly deliver.

To address this gender imbalance, GFRA is actively collaborating with Chief fishermen and leaders of the fisher associations to encourage young males to participate in the program. These individuals can support GFRA to effectively target those young males who have not yet made any investment in fishing assets and who thereby will be more willing to pursue a new skill or trade outside of the fisheries sector.

SECTION IV: CONCLUSION

These lessons from the first year of implementation have informed strategy shifts that will apply to successive cohorts of livelihoods recipients. GFRA will continue to adaptively manage the livelihoods strategy, adjusting as needed to be responsive to changing conditions and to incorporate ongoing learning. GFRA plans to scale up the livelihoods program to reach a total of 8000 young fishers by mid-2026. While this will reach a significant number of people, it will not meet the current and long term needs for continuous investment in skills training and income diversification that is needed within Ghana's coastal communities. This is particularly true as fisheries management measures such as the moratorium continue to affect fishers' ability to make a living and supplemental livelihoods also become a way to encourage fishers to abide by the rules.

No government entity has prioritized workforce development or livelihoods for fisheries communities. Thus, it remains in the hands of development partners, civil society, and fisher advocates to encourage government to target these underrepresented areas with these services. GFRA will utilize successive livelihoods cohorts to draw attention to the needs as well as the opportunities that such livelihoods investments can make for the country as a whole, and for these poor and underserved coastal areas. Starting in Year 4, GFRA will make a concerted effort to engage the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development in advocating to other government agencies and donor funded activities to extend their skills training opportunities to Ghana's coastal areas to hopefully build a sustainability strategy for the continuous provision of livelihoods support after the project's end.



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