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USAID/UCC FISHERIES AND COASTAL MANAGEMENT CAPACITY BUILDING  
SUPPORT PROJECT

**FISHERIES AND COASTAL ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION:**  
***THE ROLE OF METROPOLITAN, MUNICIPAL AND DISTRICT ASSEMBLIES***  
***(MMDAs)***

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## PREFACE

Ghana has a very fragile coastal ecosystem well-endowed with natural resources which are exploited by different sectors of the economy. This relatively small coast houses 25% of the nation's population and about 80% of the industrial establishments in Ghana thereby imposing a lot of stress on the environment and associated resources. Aside the environmental challenges, Ghana's fisheries sector is plagued with massive overcapacity of fleet, resulting in excess competition over the limited fish resources and its consequent declining productivity, economic inefficiency, low incomes, poverty and largely impoverished society. In recent times, the traditional and political fisheries management arrangements and institutional structures that have earlier synergistically managed the fisheries have also struggled to cope with challenges of the industry. In view of these environmental and fisheries management challenges, the Centre for Coastal Management of the University of Cape Coast has pooled resources, over a period of two years (2015-2016) to research into the problems with the hope of alleviating the situation. The study, dubbed *Policy and Research Dialogues on the Coastal Environment*, was designed to interrogate the roles, responsibilities and contributions of stakeholders (fishermen and fishmongers, fisheries officers, planning and coordinating directors, non-governmental organizations and central government and its decentralized agencies) to improve fisheries and coastal environment in the four coastal regions of Ghana. The findings of this Dialogue, among others is that the inability of the current institutions and systems to function in the face of the numerous contemporary challenges in the Ghanaian fisheries has given way to all the vices in the fisheries including; illegal fishing methods, under-cover deals in the distribution and sales of pre-mix fuel, trans-shipment (*saiko* fishing), overcapacity of the industry, degraded coastal sanitary conditions and a general break down of law and order in fisheries practices. The unanimous agreement by all stakeholders of the fisheries is that change is needed and the change should be driven and implemented from the bottom.

To bring about the much needed change, the Centre for Coastal Management, proposes to work with the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) to flag these issues strongly in the country's next Medium Term Development Plans (MTDP) of the Metropolitan, Municipal & District Assemblies to provide the necessary inputs and solutions to drive government policy on local economic development through improved fisheries and sanitation practices.

## 1 POLICY GUIDELINES

The proposed fisheries and sanitation interventions to be infused into national policy for the marine fisheries of Ghana centres around the following:

1. Fisheries management and governance
  - a. Roles and responsibilities of the traditional authority
  - b. Roles and responsibilities of the local government administration (MMDAs)
  - c. Proposals for local management of capacity in the fisheries
  - d. Proposals for management of pre-mix fuel distribution
  - e. Proposals for reducing illegal, unregulated and unreported fisheries
  - f. Proposals on law enforcement
  - g. Proposals for reducing and management of seasonal sea weeds invasion
2. Sanitation of the coastal environment
3. Alternative livelihood schemes
4. Capacity building
5. Research feeding into national development plans

### 1.1 Fisheries Management/Governance

Fisheries governance is a shared responsibility among all the stakeholders. Lapses on the part of any of the stakeholders tilt the equilibrium and drive the fisheries into destruction. Government policy must thus be directed towards ensuring that efforts do not exceed the carrying capacity of the fishery stocks. This requires strict enforcement on the fisheries management regulations and strengthening of local institutions through the following interventions.

#### 1.1.1 *Traditional authority*

The erstwhile powerful self-censored and self-regulatory symbol of authority in the regulation of fisheries (including imposition of conservation measures in the form of taboos and totems) is now largely embroiled in chieftaincy disputes and political nuances to the extent of losing moral authority over most of the practitioners they are intended to control. It is suggested that the system of selecting chief fishermen and konkohemaas (chief women fish processor) be shifted back to the traditional systems of king making and gazette in accordance to the laws of the land. In this regards, the MMDAs would be relevant in recognising and facilitating some of the processes.

### ***1.1.2 Role of Metropolitan, Municipalities and District Assemblies***

The decentralized Local Government Act makes representation of various government agencies at the local level but does not include the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (MoFAD). Thus the staff of the ministry are neither housed in the MMDAs nor catered for in the development plans of the local government administration in the respective metropolis or districts. This has resulted in loss of institutional memory in the fisheries information/database - a vital assessment tool and a major driver in fisheries management at the local level. The current system must be modified to embrace the staff and activities of the Fisheries Commission.

### ***1.1.3 Overcapacity in the fisheries sector***

In fisheries management a fundamental rule that ensures balance in stock and sustainable fisheries is that *an increase in efficiency results in decrease in effort*. Any increase in efficiency (increased supply of fishing gear) that is not matched in reduction in fishing effort drives the fishery into state of over-exploitation. In an over-fished system such as the Ghanaian marine waters, the persistent over-supply of fishing inputs during election year simply drives the fishery into total collapse. Government policy must be directed towards a systematic reduction of the fishing fleet with increasing scientific technology in fishing using the fish biological rhythms (spawning/reproduction periods) as a guide.

### ***1.1.4 Pre-mix fuel distribution***

Pre-mix fuel is formulated to facilitate smooth operations of the two-stroke outboard engines largely used by the artisanal fishermen. The Central Government provides a subsidy with the intention of making it affordable for the fishermen and sharing any profits realized according to a prescribed formula to support development of the landing beaches. It is administered by series of committees from the national level to the landing beaches. The regulations guiding its distribution, sales and management of profits accruing from the sales are seriously flouted at all levels. Government should gradually liberalize the sales of the product over a period of time and take its hands off its operations completely. Until that happens, there is the need to improve the system by redefining the roles of stakeholders and eliminating partisanship in its distribution. Any revenues that would have accrued from the subsidy could be used to develop the landing beaches in consultation with traditional authority and local government administration in the districts/municipalities/metropolis.

### ***1.1.5 Illegal, unregulated and unreported fisheries***

Open access and the resulting tragedy of the commons has been a universal feature of fisheries. This has led to overcapitalization of the industry and its consequent application of excess effort, degraded habitats, and depleted fish resources in the sea. New approaches to effective fisheries management involve secure access privileges, community-designated fishing areas, zoning, national access agreements, licenses and permits, and other forms of use rights or tenure. Ghana urgently needs to adopt this strategy and there is an opportunity for MMDAs to play crucial roles in reducing this canker.

### ***1.1.6 Law enforcement agencies***

The police must be current with the fisheries laws and by-laws of the local assemblies. Government should regulate fishing by instituting closed and open seasons. Government should not interfere with arrests of fisheries offenders. Use of dynamite in fishing should not be allowed and government should regulate the sales of dynamite to only authorize agencies. Government should enforce the laws on light fishing and ensure that both trawlers and canoes users abide by the laws. Trans-shipment of fish involving the capture of juvenile fishes by trawlers and sold at the high seas (locally called saiko) must be outlawed. Fisheries Enforcement Unit (FEU) should always be on the alert and respond quickly to calls for their attention. Requisite logistical support must be made available to the (FEU) who should be sufficiently trained to understand the dynamics of the fisheries business.

### ***1.1.7 Seasonal sea weeds invasion***

Seasonal invasion of sea weeds is linked to excessive nutrient loading in the seas. Farmers, industry operators and local government administration must be educated on best management practices in fertilizer application, disposal of industrial effluents and sewage management respectively to reduce the amount of nutrients being introduced in coastal waters to minimize or eliminate the occurrence of algae which has serious repercussions on the fishing industry.

## **1.2 Sanitation**

The biggest breach in environmental sanitation in the landing beaches is open defecation. Despite this behaviour of the coastal communities, Government has signed onto the Sustainable Development Goals which seeks to improve sanitation for its citizenry. The structures of the coastal communities do not lend support to this objective and therefore Government must find

innovative ways of dealing with the situation. By-laws on sanitation must be formulated and enforced by the local government administration after being gazetted by the assemblies. As a changing-society, the use of all forms of rubber product at the beaches should be abolished as this contributes to low fish catch and present serious sanitation issues. This should be backed by the Metropolitan/Municipal/District Assemblies and enforced by the police. Litter bins must be provided by the district assembly which should be positioned at easily accessible points within the community and evacuated for disposal on routine basis. Assemblies must expedite actions on re-introduction of “town council officers” in the community. It is also very important that all malfunctioning and dysfunctional canoes be evacuated from the beaches after a month’s notice. Failure to comply with this should result in the destruction of the canoes by the district assemblies together with the Chief fisherman. The ultimate incentive to keeping the environments clean is suggested to be Government’s introduction of an award scheme that recognizes communities with clean landing beaches and awarding them according on annual basis; akin to the National Farmers Day.

## **2 ALTERNATIVE AND SUPPLEMENTARY LIVELIHOOD SCHEMES**

The coastal strip has a very high population with very little diversified work opportunities. Thus anytime there is a crash in fish populations many people along the fisheries value chain suffer job losses and experiences increasing unemployment rate. Women and children bear the greatest blunt in these circumstances.

Many coastal communities are endowed with castles and other monuments that are being managed by the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board (GMMB) without the involvement of the local assemblies. It is suggested that the GMMB should work with the local authorities in improving the tourist attractions and indirectly create jobs for the teeming unemployed. Furthermore the likelihood of achieving the goal of eradicating open defecation, especially, around these monuments that the tourists will patronize will be very high.

It is also very important that financial schemes akin the Microfinance and Small Loans Centre (MASLOC) be rolled up in the coastal communities to open up credit facilities for the coastal women who are largely prepared to venture into new things in a bid to make a living to support their families and to run their homes.

### **3 CAPACITY BUILDING**

There is the need for the Centre for Coastal Management (CCM) to establish a link between its MPhil and PhD students funded under the USAID/UCC project and the coastal MMDAs to support the assemblies in capacity building and management of natural resources.

The University and CCM in particular, have the capacity to conduct research and work closely with coastal communities in many areas of economic and social discourse. To facilitate easy adoption of research findings and project recommendations, there should also be a medium for harmonizing district assembly projects/research issues and that of the CCM in terms of data collection and sharing in implementing their activities. For example earlier research works show that cultivation of cassia species for smoking fish was possible and successful and economic. It is recommended that this species could be grown at areas where sand mining has taken place for reclamation purposes and later harvested sustainably for fish smoking. Manuals for fish processing operations could be designed and provided in different languages to appreciate and understand the way of life of the different ethnic groups with different cultural setting and behaviours along the coastline.

### **4 RESEARCH FEEDING INTO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS**

The National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) draws the medium term development plan with the various Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs). The CCM could work closely with the NDPC to feed it with its numerous research findings in marine fisheries and coastal management to make a case for the prioritization of fisheries and sanitation issues along the beaches in Ghana in the next medium term development plans.

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