

WOMEN SHELLFISHERS AND FOOD SECURITY PROJECT

Addressing the need for greater attention to food security for women shellfishers and their families while improving biodiversity conservation of the ecosystems on which their livelihoods depend

The Women Shellfishers and Food Security project will strengthen the evidence base, increase awareness, and equip stakeholders to adapt and apply successful approaches for replication and scale-up in the eleven coastal West African countries from Senegal to Nigeria. It will draw on successful cases of a rights-based, ecosystem-based, participatory co-management approach to shellfish management by women in mangrove ecosystems in The Gambia and Ghana developed with USAID assistance. Knowledge and experience generated through the project will open up opportunities for improvement and broader application of these promising approaches in West Africa through these key project activities:

- 1) Conduct the first-ever participatory regional assessment** of the situation, needs, and promising approaches to shellfish co-management led by women across the eleven countries and the scope of the potential sectoral and cross-sectoral benefits.
- 2) Elaborate and test elements of models based on existing approaches through site-based research in The Gambia and Ghana** to strengthen the evidence base for successful elements of the model. The project will conduct six technical studies covering the field research to document linkages in a Theory of Change and conceptual results chain between women's shellfish co-management and livelihoods, mangrove conservation, and *nutrition*. It will examine existing elements in the approach that are not well documented, and that could enhance the approach if they are better-understood. It will document both sectoral and cross-sectoral findings.
- 3) Foster a community of practice around the development and dissemination of a toolkit** on a rights-based, ecosystem-based, participatory co-management of shellfish by women in mangrove ecosystems in West Africa with and for community, national, and regional level stakeholders. The toolkit will integrate findings from the participatory regional assessment and site-based research. Building on these activities, the toolkit development and dissemination will build a community of practice provide capacity development support of 37 stakeholder institutions in West Africa. It will provide the first practical guide for the design and implementation of women's shellfish co-management in West Africa, supported by a network of practice, among other elements such as policy briefs and case studies.



Theory of Change for site-based research

IF women's shellfish livelihoods in coastal mangrove and estuarine ecosystems in The Gambia and Ghana are improved through gender and nutrition sensitive co-management and linkages made to community based forest management in the land/seascape, THEN mangrove and estuarine biodiversity will be improved, AND IF approaches for sustainable food producing livelihoods within the coastal mangrove land/seascape contribute to a nutritionally balanced local food supply, THEN household resilience, sustainable food systems, and nutrition will improve.



Expected Outcomes

The evidence-base for empowerment of women in shellfish livelihoods as a driver of mangrove conservation and resulting food security and nutrition outcomes is strengthened.

The strength of the association between natural resources management, food security, and anemia within the mangrove-shellfish land/seascape linked socio-ecological system is measured.

Local, national, and regional stakeholders (e.g. resource users, government, academia, regional institutions, and development partners.) in West Africa are better sensitized, equipped, and networked to invest in opportunities to apply good practices for:

- empowering women to apply sustainable shellfish and forestry management approaches that address threats to deforestation and their gender dynamics.
- integrated land/seascape food production livelihood approaches for improved nutritional well-being that may be impacted by resource management measures.

Nutrition sensitive approaches to livelihoods and co-management decision-making based on piloted approaches for nutritional gap analysis and food production are demonstrated. (e.g. understanding how management measures such as closed fishing seasons impact dietary diversity, consumption of animal source foods and anemia prevalence of women oyster harvesters)

Linkages between women's shellfish co-management and community-based forestry management approaches in the mangrove land/seascape to reduce gender-based livelihoods conflicts are identified (e.g. conflicts between women shellfish harvesters wanting to protect mangroves for the oyster fishery while men cut mangroves for fuel wood)

Cross sectoral linkages that produce win-win synergies are confirmed (or not), documented and disseminated widely to promote scale up.

Anticipated Results

Research results documented and available in 7 technical reports.

1. Participatory Regional Assessment
2. Analysis of threats and drivers and restoration options
3. Sustainable land/seascape collaborative vision
4. Land-seascape food and nutrition profile
5. Analysis of shellfishery
6. Anemia research
7. Theory of Change multivariate analysis

Research hypotheses (as noted in the Theory of Change) or alternative findings are validated by research results.

74 shellfish and mangrove stakeholders are trained and:

- Have increased awareness of the basic concepts embodied in the theory of change,
- Have tools to design sustainable interventions and outcomes,
- Are networked regionally, and
- Identify plans or resources to pursue opportunities for scale up.

1 Toolkit produced and 17 Dissemination activities conducted

37 Organizations, including 11 African universities, receive capacity development support



Women oyster harvesters in Benin (top) and The Gambia (bottom)

Project Overview

Duration: 2020-2022

Funding: \$1,291,101

Implementing Partners:

Coastal Resources Center of University of Rhode Island, USA (prime); Department of Nutrition and Food Sciences, URI; World Agroforestry Center (ICRAF); University of Cape Coast/Center for Coastal Management, Ghana; University of Ghana Dept. of Nutrition and Food Science, Ghana; TRY Oyster Women's Association, The Gambia.

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