



# Fishers Develop Consensus for Fish Stock Recovery in Ghana

***“The Fisher to Fisher Dialogues has come stay, under this program, we have unanimously agreed to key management measures to manage our fishery resource and this is good for the sector and our nation as we remain focus.”***



*Nana Jojo Solomon, National Secretary of the Ghana National Canoe Fishers Council and one of the key leaders of the Fisher-to-Fisher Dialogue program.*

*“Through the F2F Dialogues, the Fisheries Commission and fishers are working together for the first time to address critical issues together.”*

*Seth Abotsi, Volta Regional Chairman, GNCFC.*

## Telling Our Story

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The artisanal fishery is an important source of livelihoods for more than 130,000 fishers and some 30,000 fish processors across the country and contribute about 80% to the overall marine fish catch, mostly the people’s fish such as a sardinellas, mackerel and anchovy. These fish species represent an affordable and accessible food protein source for poor households and play crucial role in maintaining good nutrition and health. Despite these contributions, scientific evidence supported by local knowledge from fishers pointed out that the sector is on the verge of collapse as a result of excess fishing capacity and widespread use of unsustainable fishing practices including use of light and fine mesh nets.

According to Nana Jojo Solomon, the secretary to the Ghana National Canoe Fishermen’s Council (GNCFC), “the collapse of the artisanal fishery threatens economic growth in the sector and presents an internal security problem that potentially directly affects the livelihoods of as many as 150,000 people involved in the marine fishery sector, from fishermen to processors to traders. Ghana’s fisheries are in need of support to address the decline in fish stocks and achieve sustainability.”

To build understand and support for actions responding to this challenge, the USAID Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP) worked with the Fisheries Commission to introduce the ‘Fisher-to-Fisher Dialogue’ (F2F), a mechanism that brings together fishermen and presents a platform for direct communications between the Fisheries Commission and their constituencies that builds political will and public support to make hard choices toward the recovery of the nation’s declining small pelagic fish stocks. Small pelagics, primarily mackerel, sardines and anchovies are often referred to as ‘the people’s fish’ because they make up the vast majority of the protein intake for most Ghanaians. Over the last two years, the GNCFC has worked with Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development, the Fisheries Commission, and the National Fish Processors and Traders Association to lead the F2F Dialogues across the country.

The Fisher-to-Fisher Dialogue platform has so far engaged stakeholders on key topics including progress on implementation of the National Fisheries Management Plan (NFMP) and the role of fishermen and fish processors in its implementation. According to Socrates Apetorgbor, SFMP fisheries program management, “Even the existence of the NFMP was largely unknown in some fishing communities and now fisherfolk are talking about what actions they want to take to achieve NFMP objectives! With government officials and fisherfolk directly discussing how fisherfolk themselves can become involved in the implementation of the National Fisheries Management Plan, there are already results. For example, fishers in all coastal regions are now pushing for declaration of an additional weekly non-fishing day and controlling new entrants into the artisanal sector to reduce overcapacity.”

Seth Abotsi, Volta regional chairman of the Ghana National Canoe Fishermen’s Council said, “Through the F2F Dialogues, the Fisheries Commission and fishers are working together for the first time to address critical issues together.” Nana Jojo Soloman continues, “We are confident that ‘the people’s fish’ are on the path to recovery with the support of USAID SFMP for the F2F Dialogue program. This is a gift from the American people to the fishers of Ghana.”