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SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROJECT (SFMP)

Norms for Management Of Community-Based Fishery In Ankobra Estuary



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GRADUATE SCHOOL
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Cover photo: A section of Community members at a community consultation meeting (Credit: Hen Mpoano)

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ACRONYMS

CBFM	Community-Based Fisheries Management
HM	Hen Mpoano
SFMP	Sustainable Fisheries Management Project
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

The Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP) supports the Government of Ghana's fisheries development policies and objectives and assists the country to end overfishing and rebuild targeted fish stocks. Adoption of sustainable fishing practices and reduced exploitation to end overfishing is the only way to ensure sustainability of Ghana's marine fisheries.

One of the early actions has been the development and implementation of Community Based Fisheries Management (CBFM) Plans in the Densu, Pra and Ankobra estuaries.

1.1 Introduction

Since FY 16, Hen Mpoano has facilitated series of participatory resource management and capacity building activities for five Ankobra river estuarine communities. This culminated in the preparation of a community-based fisheries management plan for the Ankobra river estuary. The management plan preparation was a community-owned process which witnessed the participation of over 1,000 resource users, including fishmongers and processors. The management plan briefly described the conditions of fisheries and associated resources of the estuary; key issues and challenges in the fishery and also outlined key management measures and their implementation strategy. To assure effective implementation of the management, notably enforcing rules through instituting clear and appropriate sanctions for offenders, the participating communities agreed to formulate social norms to guide the implementation process. This report provides an account of the process for development of the social norms and the resulting outcomes.

SECTION 2: PROCESS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF NORMS

Generally, norms are specific sets of rules, beliefs and thoughts meant to guide, regulate or control the conduct or behavior of people in a particular society or situation. Within the context of the Ankobra community-based fisheries management area, the norms are meant to regulate the exploitation of fisheries resources which will promote sustainability of livelihoods. Against the background of depleting fisheries resources, the norms also seek to promote behavior change. A participatory approach was throughout the process of developing the norms. In a first step, the views of as many community members were solicited on existing norms and new ones to be used to control exploitation of natural resources. This was done to avoid the imposition of new norms on the communities.

A meeting was therefore organized for 27 people chosen from each of five communities on the August 27, 2018 at a local meeting point along the river estuary. Participants of this meeting were community leaders who are respected as holders of local knowledge including understanding of the customs and traditions of the Nzemaland. The participants in this meeting drafted initial norms which were later subjected to series of community validation exercises



Figure 1:A section of Community members at Ankobra meeting

The following is the list of proposed social norms and sanctions derived from this meeting;

2.1 General norms for managing natural resources

- Farming activities are prohibited around closed areas.
- Fishing on the days of the gods in each community are also prohibited.
- Fishing activities are also prohibited during the closed season in each of the communities.
- Harvesting of trees along the banks of the river is prohibited unless authorized by chiefs and elders.
- Farming close to river not allowed- buffer zone to be allowed.
- Defecation into water bodies not allowed.
- Use of small-sized nets not allowed.
- Catching of juvenile fish not allowed.
- Pumping of water from closed areas not allowed.
- Use of chemical to fish is not allowed.
- Dredging of closed areas not allowed.
- Digging of gold in closed areas not allowed.
- Fishing closed areas is allowed during open season.
- No sale of land around closed areas.
- Hunting of crocodiles in closed areas is not allowed.
- Redirection of water courses, especially in closed areas is prohibited.
- Cage culture for fish farming in closed areas is prohibited since it will lead to violation of ban.

- Harvesting of bamboo or mangroves along banks of river prohibited.

2.2 Norms of relevance for fisheries management

- Sanwoma- No fishing on Thursdays.
- Eziom- No fishing Wednesdays and Fridays.
- Adelekezo- No fishing on Saturdays.
- Eshiem- No Fishing on Fridays.
- Kukuaville- No fishing on Tuesdays.

Table 1: Closed seasons in each community

Community	Name of Tributary	Period of closure
Adelekezo	Ehema Solo	One month in every quarter. Areas identified as breeding grounds closed for the whole year.
Eziom-	Eyehu	January –February
Eshiem	Mamawure	January – March
Kukuaville	Fenyi	January – March
Sanwoma	Ebunli Ekye	May – July.

2.3 Sanctions

- Seizure of fishing gear
- Arrest by palace police to be fined- two bottles of Schnapps, One sheep or goat, money- Ghc 700.00
- Repeated offence – banned from fishing
- Gold digging equipment will be seized and destroyed
- Canoes used in fishing in closed areas will be seized
- Those who use chemicals in fishing will be fined Ghc700 at chief's palace.



Figure 2: A section of community members at Eshiem meeting

SECTION 3: COMMUNITY VALIDATION SESSIONS

To ensure buy-in, a validation meeting was held in each of the communities for a larger number of people to discuss and make inputs into the norms developed by the representatives of the communities who met at Ankobra on August 14, 2018. The validation meetings were held in the five CBFM areas, namely Ankobra, Ezium, Adelekazo, Eshiem, and Kukuavile.

The first validation meeting was held on August 16, 2018 at Ankobra during which the norms were presented and discussed by 48 community members including the *Odikro*-Nana Nkrumah. Members present expressed concern about the drastic decline in fishing activities as results of bad fishing activities around the Ankobra estuary in addition to deforestation along the banks of the Ankobra River. On the potency of the gods, Mr Isaac Asare. A member of the CBFM in Ankobra narrated that:

“Two years ago, a man went to cut wood around the closed area (Ebuqli Ekye), leaving behind his food under a tree closer to him. Before he could realize the food was missing. He thought somebody had taken it away. This was followed by the disappearance of his drinking water. It was then he realized that something mysterious was happening. He also began hearing the sound of cutlass cutting a tree around him without seeing a person. He became frightened and ran back home only to fall sick for a long time before he died.”

He said that this story was known to many people in the area and emphasized the need to respect traditional norms which is also a sign of respect for the gods of the area. This, he noted, will ultimately contribute to sustainable fisheries resources.

In his address, Odikro Nkrumah advised the people to observe the norms which their fore fathers used to protect the Ankobra River and its tributaries. He informed them that he had sent message to the Asanta and Bobrama, two neighboring communities on the new measures being put in place to manage fishing activities with a warning that violations would attract severe punishments. After the discussions the community members expressed their support for the norms.

The second and third meetings were held at Kukuavile and Adelekazo on August 22 and 23 respectively. In all 64 people attended the Adelekazo meeting while 42 attended the Kukuavile meeting. As in the previous meeting, the participants accepted the proposed norms for their respective communities and expressed the hope that they would be enforced to safeguard their livelihoods.

The fourth and fifth meetings were held on August 24, 2018 at Eziom and Eshiem respectively. Attendance at Eziom was 38 and that of Eshiem was 54. The presentations were led by community leaders from the two communities in the local dialect- Nzema. After this there was open discussion and questions were asked for which answers and clarifications were provided by both the HM team and senior members from each community.



Figure 3: Some community members addressing some issues during the validation meetings in Eziom and Ajomoro Eshiem.

At Eziom, madam Abelema Ezuah had this to say concerning the god in the local tributary.

“In the past, when I was a young girl, people in this village could hear the voice of a god greeting with another one responding without seeing them. This happened before and after the closed season of the Eyehu tributary. We used to get a lot of fish in that zone. These days we do not hear this again. Everything is gone. Children of these days do not fear anything. That is why we are suffering.”

Many people at the meeting, especially the older ones confirmed hearing this story from their parents.

3.1 Outcomes

- All the five communities accepted to observe the day on which fishing is banned in each community
- In addition to the Ghc 700 fine an extra fine of one sheep and two bottles of schnapps was also accepted
- No mining activities will be allowed in each the five tributaries of the Ankobra river
- Buffer zone along each of the lagoons would be enforced
- The traditional closed season in each of the communities would be observed
-

3.2 Institutional arrangements for enforcement of norms

All the communities agreed on the following institutional arrangements for the enforcement of the norms:

- Traditional authorities in each of the five communities shall impose and collect fines
- CBFM members in each of the communities will coordinate with the traditional authorities to monitor compliance with the norms.
- The fines collected will be used for development of the communities.

SECTION 4: CONCLUSION

The process for developing a community-based fisheries management plan for the Ankobra river estuary serves as example of community-driven and participatory development of actions at the community level to safeguard fisheries resources. Moving forward, implementation of the management plan and enforcement of social norms will be monitored together with key community leaders. Lessons will be documented to inform national fisheries co-management policy and legislation.