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SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROJECT (SFMP)

Report on Community Town Hall
Meeting at Moree in Abura-Asebu-
Kwamankese District of Central
Region

2015



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SSG Advisors:	http://ssg-advisors.com/
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ACRONYMS

CEDECOM	Central Region Development Commission
CEWEFIA	Central and Western Region Fishmongers Improvement Association
CHRAJ	Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice
CLaT	Child Labour and Trafficking
DAA	Development Action Association
DSW	Department of Social Welfare
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FC	Fisheries Commission
FoN	Friends of Nation
MOFAD	Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development
SFMP	Sustainable Fisheries Management Program
SNV	Netherlands Development Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFCL	Worst Forms of Child Labour

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In line with the activities planned for the Month of March, 2015 as part of the USAID / Ghana Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP), the CEWEFIA Project Team organized a town hall meeting on Tuesday, 31st March, 2015 at the Moree Community Centre.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

- To create awareness on the SFMP to all the stakeholders and the benefits of the project to the community.
- To debrief stakeholders on the role of CEWEFIA in the project.

3.0 ATTENDANCE

The meeting had a high turn-out. In attendance were key officials of the Abura-Asebu-Kwamankese District and Moree Community including District Coordinating Director, Planning Officer, Central Regional Deputy Director of Fisheries Commission Moree Chief Fishermen, Central Regional Director of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Head of the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), Head of Department of Social Welfare, Head of Information Services Department, District Director of MoFA, Rep. from Town and Country Planning, Deputy Education Director, Nana Kweigyia VII, Konkohen of Moree, Regent of Moree and his Elders, Ex Assemblypersons, Ex Unit Committee Chairmen, Women's Group Leaders, Community members

4.0 OUTCOME

The meeting started at 2:30 pm with a prayer by a community member. Subsequently, the Executive Director of CEWEFIA, Victoria Churchill Koomson (Mrs.) welcomed all stakeholders to the meeting. In the welcome address, the Executive Director spelt out the role of CEWEFIA in the SFMP. She further explained that the fishmongers were going to be the final beneficiaries of the project and that CEWEFIA as an Organization was only an Activity Team to help play the role for the success of the project and that their full support was very much needed. Afterwards, the Chairman for the meeting Nana Kweigyia VII, the Chief Fisherman of Moree gave his opening remarks.

The Guest Speaker for the meeting, Mr. George Anti, the Central Regional Deputy Director of Fisheries Commission in his key note address, mentioned the various plans that the Commission had put in place to help boost the fishing Industry. He also touched on the decline of the fish stocks in the marine ecosystems and how it needed to be rebuilt through the effort of both the commission and the stakeholders present. Concerning fisheries laws to prevent the fishermen from further depleting the fish stocks, he assured all the participants that the commission and the Government were ready to enforce them but only that the fishermen themselves needed to change their behavior and attitudes towards the fishing Industry to make it sustainable.

The Project Officer for CEWEFIA read the USAID /GHANA SFMP 'SONG SHEET' to the people, after which he explained it vividly in the Fante language for the fisher folks who were mainly non-literates to understand the project since it was meant for them. Officials from the District as well as the community members were also given the platform to express their opinion on the project

The Abura-Asebu-KwaamanKese District Coordinating Director was the first to make his statement. In his statement, he rendered his sincere thanks to the USAID, CRC / URI for such

a laudable project which will alleviate poverty in the fishing communities in the District. He therefore assured CEWEFIA of the District's support to make the project successful.

The District Director of the Department of Social Welfare also spoke on Formal Education since it was the future of the children of school going-age. He advised the women to send their children to school especially the girl-child and provide their school needs. Again, he advised the women not to send their children to Lake Volta to engage in dangerous fishing practices and their girls to La Cote d' Ivoire to engage in child prostitution which were common practices in Moree. Furthermore, she assured the women of the Department's support to address children and women issues.

The District Director of CHRAJ also spoke on matters relating to Formal Education. She explained that Child Labour and Trafficking was a violation of child and Human Rights and therefore advised parents not to relent on their efforts as far as their children's education was concerned. She told the teeming crowd at the meeting that her outfit had the mandate to deal with rights issues and hence assured everybody that CHARJ would see to it that rights of children and women were not trampled on with impunity.

The former District Chief Executive of Abura-Asebu-KwaamanKese who was also the former Member of Parliament for Mfantseman West Constituency and currently, the Deputy Director of Education at AAK Education Directorate touched on pertinent issues concerning education which pertained to the fisher folks. In his statement he brought his rich experience in fishing to bear. He made it known to the fishing community that his parents were fishers, yet he was able to receive formal education and now he was the breadwinner of the family. In this regard, he advised the community to take formal education seriously. In addition, he assured the fishermen that any time they wanted him to facilitate on issues relating to fish and fishing he would be at their disposal to give to them what he termed he had in his "coconut" meaning head.

An officer of EPA spoke vehemently on illegal sand winning and advised the community to refrain from it as it could lead to flooding and the depleting of the ozone layer. Community members were advised to be watch dogs at the beaches to ward off people who go there to win sand

The Director of Town and Country Planning made a statement on the haphazard use of land for building. She said that the community members were not consulting the office to seek permit for land acquired before putting up structures. He advised the community members to be law-abiding to avoid demolishing of their buildings.

4.1 Open Public Forum

Community members both male and female were given the opportunity to ask questions or offer very important submissions. The Konkohene of Moree who talked on behalf of all the fish processors at Moree wanted to be sure whether the role which CEWEFIA read to them was real or a hoax. She wanted to know again whether the project was going to be sustainable as they heard it or a nine day wonder. The reason was that many NGOs had been in the community to initiate projects of which the fishmongers were the beneficiaries but to no avail. Some of them after meeting them to discuss the modalities of the projects never visited them again.

Another aspect she touched on was the seizure of the small sized nets popularly known as "Tenga Ebowa". She and her fishmongers did not understand why such nets should be seized from the fishermen since those nets were meant purposely for a type of fish during its season. She explained that as a result of the seizure, the women were not getting fish to process and so could neither get money to care for the home nor buy school needs for their children. She

pleaded with the Fisheries Commission to ask the Government of Ghana to release the nets to the fishermen. Aside the problem confronting them, she and her association members assured CEWEFIA Project Team that they were going to rally behind them with all the support they would have to make the project succeed since they and their children were the main beneficiaries.

Almost all of the people who had the platform spoke on the same issues, they did not understand why Fisheries Commission had ordered their nets to be seized and that they wanted FC to release their nets to them. However, one fishmonger said that the illegal fishing methods the fishermen were using were not helping them. She indicated that the fish brought to the beaches was always not good and so after processing it when sent to the marketing Centers could not yield any profit. They were always incurring losses. She advised the Fisheries Commission to enforce the laws to prevent the fishermen from using the illegal fishing methods.

4.2 Closing Remarks

Nana Kweigya VII, the Chief Fisherman and the Chairman for the meeting in his closing remarks categorically hammered on the illegal methods of fishing adopted by the fishermen and advised them to have a heart in order to bring sanity in the whole fishing Industry. He was indeed happy about the project which would be implemented in Moree. He called for concerted effort to make the project a reality.

5.0 CHALLENGES

- Some of the Government Officials were not punctual at the meeting which compelled some of the community members especially the women to leave the Centre for their homes to go and prepare their evening meals.

5.1 Lessons Learned

- The community members are very much aware of the problems confronting the fisheries sector. They only want key people to lead them to resolve them.
- Organizing Community Meetings in the late afternoons does not encourage the full participation of women.

6.0 CONCLUSION

Government officials and community members were enthused about the project. The full participation of all government agencies, community stakeholders, fishermen, fish processors, women's groups and their ability to relate comments appropriately and asked critical questions show their willingness to support the USAID/SFMP