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Mapping women's small-scale fisheries organizations in Ghana: results from assessing current capacities, gaps and opportunities to strengthen women's organizations in the sector

Applying the handbook

in support of the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication

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Overview

To support sustainable food systems and nutrition in sub-Saharan Africa, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) provided funding to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to support project activities in five countries – Ghana, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Uganda, and United Republic of Tanzania – with a focus on strengthening women’s roles in post-harvest processing and trade. Around the world, women perform essential work throughout small-scale fisheries food systems, yet much of this work is overlooked. Where women are not seen or acknowledged as important actors in fish value chains, they remain underrepresented in or excluded from formal governance processes, and have limited say in decision-making. This lack of visibility also hinders women’s equal access to needed extension services and assets, such as credit and technology. As part of the FAO-NORAD project “Empowering women in small-scale fisheries for sustainable food systems”, the decision was made to focus on strengthening women’s roles in small-scale fisheries value chains as a means to increase the quantity and quality of small fish for human consumption and trade. In addition to the focus on food security and nutrition, the project aimed to help women both individually and as members of small businesses, professional organizations and cooperatives to build and improve their skills and capacity to do their work. To attain these goals, it was determined that a baseline empirical assessment of the current landscape of organizations and their primary characteristics, capacities and needs was needed as a first step.

The focus on gender equality and women’s fishing organizations in the FAO-NORAD project aligns with the priorities for small-scale fisheries governance outlined in the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines). Gender equity and equality are core objectives and guiding principles of the SSF Guidelines. An entire thematic chapter (Chapter 8) is dedicated to this goal, as it outlines the right to organize and the need to support women’s fishing organizations as a means to enhance women’s access to and participation in governance, and to strengthen their position within fish value chains. This chapter also foregrounds the need for alternative evaluation systems, measures, and technologies appropriate to women’s work in fisheries.

Through the FAO-NORAD project, survey data was used to “map” women’s organizations and assess their present capacities and needs in the small-scale fisheries sector. Data collection for this study (herein referred to as the Women’s SSF Mapping Assessment) in Ghana focused on six regions: Western, Central, Eastern, Greater Accra, Volta and Oti. Across these regions, a total of 46 surveys were collected between 23 September and 5 November 2020 (for a full overview of the study methods, see Appendix 1). The results of this study and related recommendations for capacity enhancement activities were later validated by stakeholders at the National Inception and Consultative Workshop held on 20–23 April 2021 in Winneba in the Central region. The workshop was attended by 59 participants, including fish processors drawn from ten project communities; officers from the Fisheries Commission and other partner agencies, including the Food and Drugs Authority (FDA) and the Food Research Institute (CSIR-FRI); and civil society organizations and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Each of the ten communities were represented by two processors who participated in project-related surveys (e.g. the study’s baseline assessment) and a leader from at least one women’s small-scale fisheries group. In addition, women’s small-scale fisheries group leaders at the district, regional and national levels were also invited. In all, 30 fish processors and leaders participated in the validation process.

Part A: Summary of present capacities and opportunities to strengthen women's small-scale fisheries organizations in Ghana

Overview of present organizational characteristics

Women's small-scale fisheries groups in Ghana share many structural similarities: they are all associations, and most groups have formal administrative structures in place (e.g. constitution, executive committee) and basic functional internal rules governing their day-to-day operations. As associations, most groups function relatively independently (e.g. members engage in processing and trading of small, medium or large pelagics independently) and contribute either a percentage of their profits or a membership fee to the group account on a regular basis, or make financial contributions to the group account as needed. There are also similarities among the groups in terms of their history and the context of their formation. Most groups are relatively young (formed within the last five years), with a handful of outlying older groups that were formed more than 20 years ago. Most were formed on their own initiative by a group of community members for the common purposes of becoming more visible to the government, enhancing their mutual social welfare, and enhancing access to external financial support. The majority meet regularly (at least 1–2 times a month), with most members actively participating in group meetings and activities. Members describe positive internal communications where information is shared and made accessible to all members.

Current strengths, capacity gaps and opportunities to strengthen women's small-scale fisheries organizations

STRENGTHS: Women's small-scale fisheries groups currently have several strengths including shared objectives, relatively strong rates of member participation (particularly for village-level groups), good internal communication, and active trading networks and market access for their fish products. Members feel that they benefit from their current group membership and also see value in their group being or becoming a member of a higher-level platform or umbrella group (such as a district-, regional- or national-level group). Groups perceive their main strengths as unity among members, strong social support, and transparency and information sharing.

CAPACITY GAPS: Currently, groups need assistance strengthening their leadership, administration and financial literacy. Better access to training and technology for post-harvest processing and to external financial support would help these groups develop further and achieve their goals. Moreover, the linkages with higher-level groups needs to be strengthened, as well as communication within groups and between groups and the government. In addition, the current national umbrella organization, the National Association of Fish Processors and Traders (NAFPTA), needs to be strengthened to ensure it is representative, that it engages at the grassroots community level, and that it has district and regional leaders who are active. Below, these capacity gaps are translated into opportunities to strengthen the capacity of women's small-scale fisheries groups in Ghana.

Opportunities and proposed interventions to enhance the capacity of women's small-scale fisheries organizations

In this section, we outline six multi-part interventions to strengthen women's small-scale fisheries groups in Ghana. These proposed interventions were developed based on analysis of the empirical

survey results (presented in full in Part B) of the Women's SSF Mapping Assessment. Once developed, the recommendations were shared at a workshop with stakeholders and women from the small-scale fisheries sector in Ghana for validation: workshop participants provided their feedback on each activity (e.g. considerations, concerns, alternative suggestions), designated its priority level, and suggested key partners. The proposed interventions below reflect their feedback.

1) **Formalize groups and enhance their current administrative capacities.**

- a. Help newly formed groups become registered.
 - i. *Feedback:* Agreed
 - ii. *Priority level:* High
 - iii. *Partnerships:* Registrar General Department (RGD), Department of Cooperatives (DoC), Fisheries Commission (FC), Ghana Enterprise Agency (GEA), Social Welfare Department, local assemblies, Business Resource Centres (BRCs)
- b. Enhance basic administrative structures and procedures through **training on group administration, leadership, and financial literacy**. Training should be targeted to groups at all levels, including the national level (NAFPTA), to ensure leaders are active, organizational procedures are established and followed, and communication is accessible.
 - i. *Feedback:* Agreed
 - ii. *Priority level:* High
 - iii. *Partnerships:* BRCs/GEA, DoC FC
- c. **Develop accessible guidelines on group administration based on best practices** in the sector (e.g. models of successful village, district and regional groups) including group structure, rules (democratic rule-making, rules for the timing of leadership change) and procedures (keeping meeting minutes, transparent accounting, updated membership lists).
 - i. *Feedback:* Agreed
 - ii. *Priority level:* High
 - iii. *Partnerships:* Local NGOs, FAO, International Collective in Support of Fishworkers, DoC

2) **Provide guidance on setting goals and strategic planning.**

- a. **Provide leadership training** to help group leaders guide their groups to **identify feasible short-, medium- and long-term goals** and work collectively to **design a plan to meet those goals**. Such training should be developed for and provided to village-level groups and also for the leaders of higher-level groups (e.g. NAFPTA).
 - i. *Feedback:* Agreed
 - ii. *Priority level:* High
 - iii. *Partnerships:* NGOs, FC, FAO, BRCs/GEA, DoC

3) **Strengthen the function of higher-level groups and connectivity among levels.**

- a. Assess the intended **function and role of district-, regional- and national-level groups** to ensure they are fulfilling a useful role and are perceived as legitimate. Most groups either are or want to be a member of a higher-level group, but these groups are not currently

as active or well-functioning as village-level groups. If the purpose of these groups is clarified and better aligned with needs at the local level, then participation rates among these groups would likely improve. Any needs assessment should be participatory.

- i. *Feedback:* Agreed
- ii. *Priority level:* High
- iii. *Partnerships:* FC, FAO, NGOs, DoC

- b. Provide **administrative training** and create **accountability mechanisms** to **strengthen connections among lower- and higher-level groups**. In addition, ensure that higher-level groups are both **downwardly accountable** (supplying their members with information and resources, and serving as a platform to connect them) and **upwardly accountable** (linked to a regional or national association as appropriate and reporting upward). Enhancing the capacity of higher-level groups and strengthening the connections among levels would create a stronger and more durable network of associations in Ghana, with grassroots legitimacy and in partnership with the government.

- i. *Feedback:* Encourage information flow, bottom-up and vice versa.
- ii. *Priority level:* High
- iii. *Partnerships:* DoC, NGOs, FAO

- c. **Higher-level groups**, once strengthened, could be **key hubs for offering training** (and follow-up), sharing information, becoming sources of credit and soft loans, supplying collective high-value assets (cold storage, office space), and facilitating learning exchanges.

- i. *Feedback:* Provide training to strengthen groups and encourage information flow to the grassroots level.
- ii. *Priority level:* High
- iii. *Partnerships:* FAO, FC, NGOs

4) **Improve access to technology and technical knowledge.**

- a. Increase **access to post-harvest processing technologies** including raised drying racks, dry and cold storage space, improved ovens, and awareness of or access to spaces with better ventilation when smoking fish. Access could be enhanced through grants to purchase these items or through **communal centres** where these resources are made available for use to multiple groups operating in the same area.

- i. *Feedback:* Provide loans or individual support/grants; improve the efficiency of ovens; establish policy for use of improved ovens, and incentives for adoption.
- ii. *Priority level:* High

iii. *Partnerships:* Ghana Regional Appropriate Technology Industrial Service (GRATIS) Foundation, FAO, FC, Food Research Institute (FRI)

- b. **Provide training on quality control and consistency** in drying, smoking, and other value-added processing steps. For any training, groups requested follow-up training as well.

- i. *Feedback:* Agreed
- ii. *Priority level:* High
- iii. *Partnerships:* FRI, Ghana Standards Authority (GSA), FDA, FC

- 5) **Enhance government outreach and communication with women's small-scale fisheries groups.**
- a. Given that greater visibility to the government is the most common reason that groups initially form, better systems of communication with groups, outreach, and provision of extension services would **strengthen the relationship between women's small-scale fisheries groups and the government.**
 - i. *Feedback:* Agreed
 - ii. *Priority level:* High
 - iii. *Partnerships:* FC, FAO, NGOs
 - b. Ensure **government contact is made with groups on a regular basis** (e.g. seasonal contact) **using a combination of methods** (phone contact, field visits, training), while also ensuring that coverage of groups is consistent and fair. Having clear guidelines for how the government should communicate with groups (e.g. who is responsible, how often, keeping record of contacts) would enhance consistency. In addition, making groups aware of who they can contact (e.g. a gender desk) would empower them to reach out as needed.
 - i. *Feedback:* Agreed
 - ii. *Priority level:* High
 - iii. *Partnerships:* Information Services Department (ISD), FAO, FC, NGOs
- 6) **Improve access to external financial support.**
- a. Most groups have only had limited access to external financial support. Especially younger groups would benefit from initial seed funds to establish and expand themselves. Access to **soft loans and grants** is most desired, which could be coordinated by the government (either providing the support or helping connect groups to information about sources of external financial support) or by higher-level groups such as NAFPTA or district/regional groups.
 - i. *Feedback:* Agreed
 - ii. *Priority level:* High
 - iii. *Partnerships:* German Development Agency or Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), NORAD, USAID, Village Savings and Loans Associations

Part B: Results of the Women's SSF Mapping Assessment Survey

Group location and structure

Women's small-scale fisheries organizations work in a variety of aquatic environments, including both marine and freshwater (Figure 1). Most groups work in fisheries in the Gulf of Guinea (68 percent), Volta Lake (24 percent), or rivers (e.g. Volta, Pra, Ankobra – 11 percent). Women's small-scale fisheries groups operate at a variety of levels, including at the village level (72 percent), district (15 percent) and region (10 percent). All organizations surveyed identified as associations, of which slightly more than one-half are formally registered, typically with their Registrar General's Office. Nearly all groups have basic administrative structures in place (Figure 2), including an executive committee (96 percent), a constitution or by-laws (83 percent), meeting records or minutes (80 percent), a bank account (74 percent), and updated membership lists (67 percent). **There are opportunities to formalize groups and help strengthen the above-mentioned administrative attributes through administrative training or through accessible guidelines on best practices for administrative procedures for associations.**

Figure 1. Aquatic environments where women's small-scale fisheries groups operate

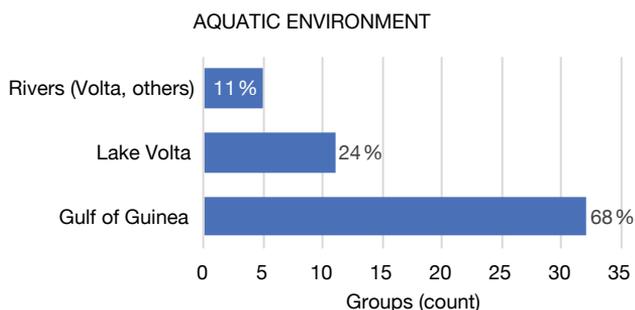
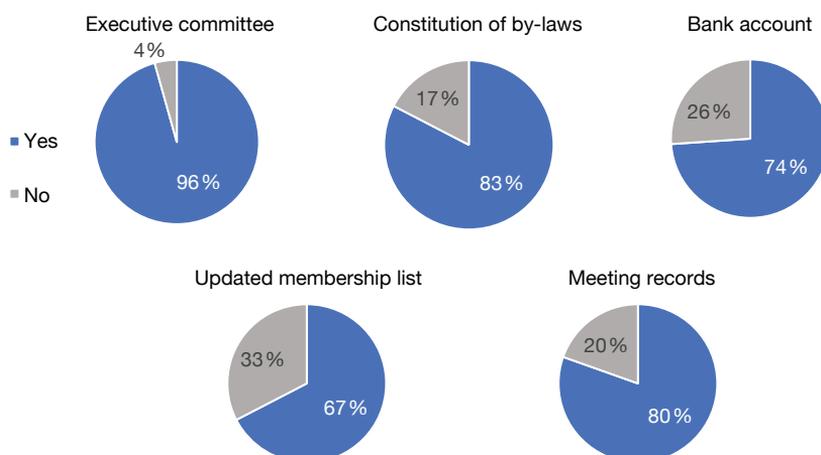


Figure 2. Basic administrative structures in groups' current operations



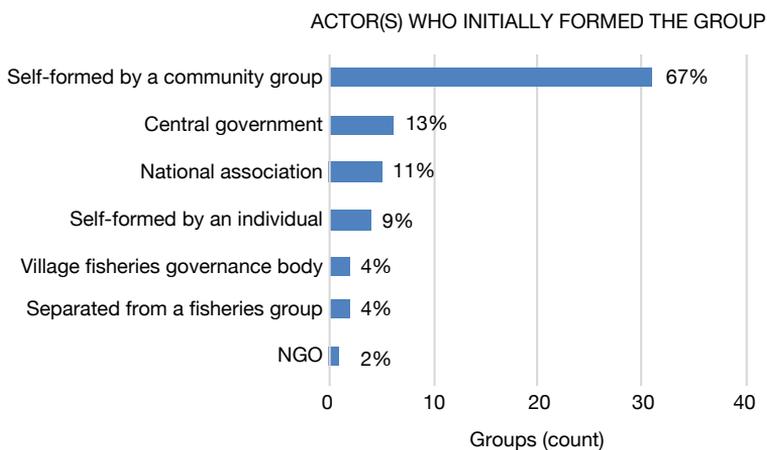
Group age and stage of activity

Women's small-scale fisheries groups in Ghana are relatively young but have been active for 9 years on average (Figure 3). Given that the oldest group (63 years old) was an outlier, the median group age of 5 years provides a better national picture of how long groups have been together. Most groups formed on their own initiative (i.e. self-formed), either by a group of like-minded community members (67 percent) or with outside help from the central government (13 percent) or NAFPTA (11 percent), among others (Figure 4).

Figure 3. Age range for groups (minimum, maximum and median years the groups have been together) and average time it takes to become formally registered after groups are initially formed



Figure 4. Types of actors that initiated the formation of women's small-scale fisheries groups. In Ghana, academic institutions, district governments, local councils or chairpersons, and development projects were not contributors to groups' initial formation



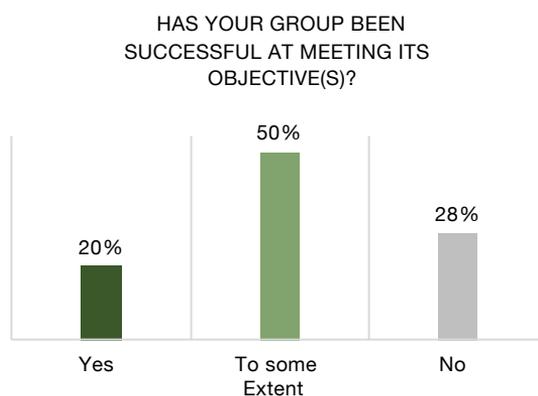
The main objectives of groups vary (Table 1), with the most common objectives being to enhance visibility to the government (70 percent), enhance social welfare and solidarity among members (65 percent), improve access to external financial support (61 percent), improve household income (50 percent), and learn new technical skills (39 percent). The rate of success in meeting these objectives is mixed, with one-half reporting that they have been somewhat successful at meeting their objectives, but 28 percent indicating they have not been successful (Figure 5). The proportion

of groups who perceive that they have not been successful is highest for district-level groups and lowest for village-level groups. The most common focus for collective group energy is on meeting primary objectives (41 percent), followed by initial formation (26 percent) and emergent objectives (26 percent); three groups reported that they are presently inactive (7 percent). Women’s small-scale fisheries groups in Ghana are in a variety of stages of collective action. It is likely that the stage they are currently focused on will impact what their main capacities and needs are: for instance, groups focused on initial formation could use assistance becoming registered and creating good governance structures and administrative procedures. For all groups, capacity enhancement activities that help identify primary and secondary objectives and translate these objectives into short-, medium- and long-term plans would help groups make more progress towards their goals and enhance perceptions of group efficacy and success.

Table 1. Groups’ main purpose or objective (groups could indicate more than one)

Main purpose/objective	Number of groups	Percentage
Greater visibility to the government	32	70
Social welfare	30	65
Access to external financial support	28	61
Improving household income	23	50
Learning new skills	18	39
Collective savings	11	24
Access to workspace	7	15
Access to fish	7	15
Participation in formal fisheries management	6	13

Figure 5. Perceptions of success at meeting group objectives

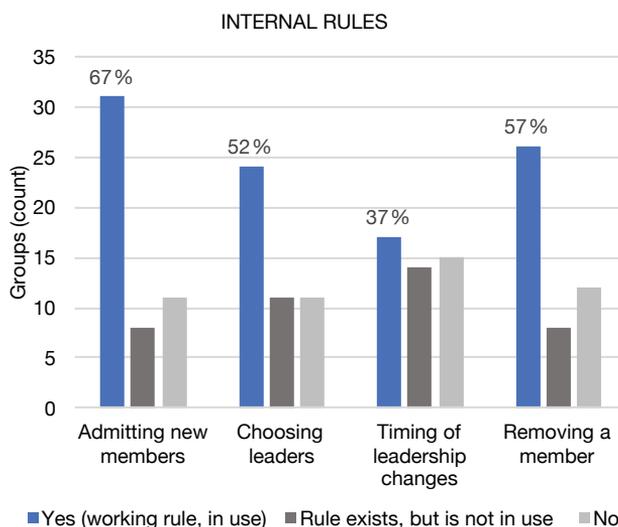


Rules

Internally, most groups reported that they have functional rules in place governing their day-to-day activities, including admitting new members (67 percent), removing a member (57 percent), choosing leaders (52 percent), and the timing of leadership change (37 percent – Figure 6). However, district- and regional-level groups reported lower breadth of rules or rates of usage in general compared

to village-level groups. Most groups (80 percent) reported that all members (both executive committee and regular group members) participate in rule-making, although 20 percent of groups reported that only executive committee members make rules. Group members typically pay their dues either always or most of the time (33 percent and 22 percent, respectively), but a handful of groups appear to have issues getting members to pay ongoing dues or membership fees, especially district- and regional-level groups. In response to how often leadership changes, “every 4 years” or “not applicable (we do not have a rule for the timing of leadership change)” were the most common responses. Compared to the other countries studied, this is a longer rotation (4 years, instead of yearly or every 2–3 years) for leadership change; moreover, the rate of “NA” responses is also higher. The number of groups that lack a clear rule about the timing of leadership changes could be an issue, possibly meaning there is no democratic leadership change, or, in the absence of a rule, there could be conflict around the timing of leadership change. **Administrative training sessions encouraging groups to create the above-mentioned rules would enhance group functioning. While democratic, participatory rule-making should be encouraged, national guidelines could also be developed. Given that all groups are associations, NAFPTA could provide guidelines for new groups or poorly functioning groups to model their rule-making procedures.**

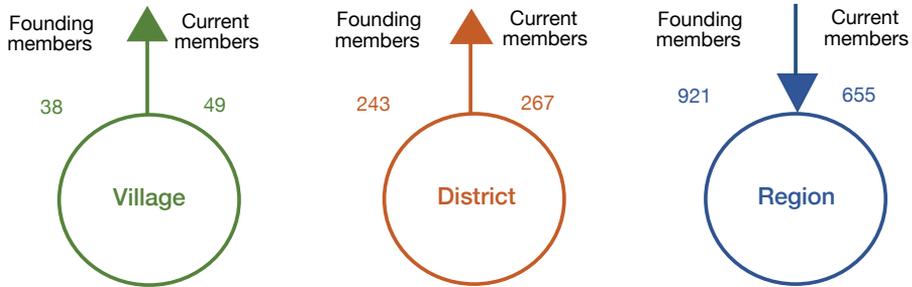
Figure 6. Presence of different types of internal rules and their status



Group characteristics: size, gender and participation

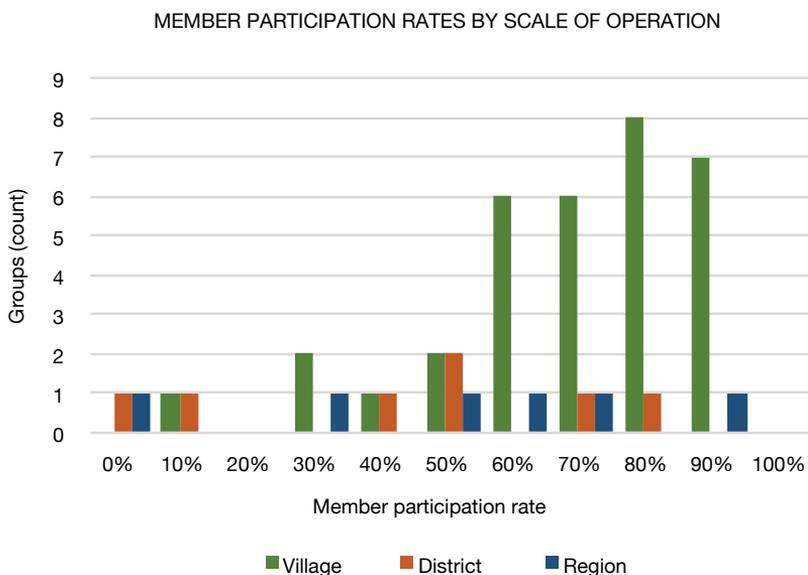
The average group size varies depending on the scale of group operation, with village-level groups averaging 49 members at present, district-level 267 members, and regional-level groups 655 members (Figure 7). Village- and district-level groups have generally grown in number since their initial formation, whereas regional-level groups have lost members over time. The average group size for village- and district-level groups was larger in Ghana than in other countries where the same survey methods were applied. About one-half of the groups were mixed-gender groups, while the average gender composition across all groups was 93 percent women members. One-third of mixed-gender groups reported that there is a gendered division of labour, and these groups tended to be village-level groups where men go fishing or cut fish while women transport fish and perform processing and marketing tasks.

Figure 7. Average group size for organizations operating at different levels (e.g. village, district, regional) at time of formation and at present. The arrows indicate the direction of growth over time (e.g. increase or decrease in average group size)



Nearly all groups (93 percent) are interested in growing their membership. Nearly two-thirds reported that they can find new members and grow, while one-third said they are unable to identify new members to expand their group. Member participation averaged 62 percent (median of 70 percent) across all groups. But participation was higher on average for village-level groups (68 percent) than district- or regional-level groups (43 percent and 50 percent, respectively). Overall participation rates for all group types (village, district and regional) had a lot of variation, indicating some groups are doing well in terms of member participation but others are experiencing problems (Figure 8). About 45 percent of groups have member participation rates of 60 percent or less. Lower reported levels of member participation indicate that commitment is weaker in some groups, which would benefit from training on group dynamics and administration. Strengthening linkages among village, district, regional and national associations (e.g. through better communication, information sharing, training, transparency) could enhance the function and connectivity among groups at different levels, creating a more durable network of associations in Ghana with ties to the government and other national and international organizations.

Figure 8. Member participation rates by scale of operation



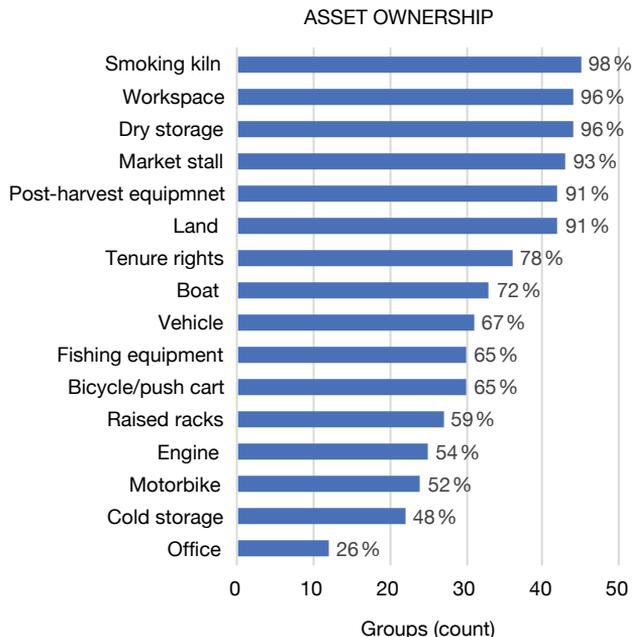
Internal communication and meetings

Strong internal communication and information sharing was reported among groups. Most groups reported that information is shared “always” or “most of the time” among group members (70 percent and 22 percent, respectively), and that this information is accessible to all or most members. Groups with lower rates of information sharing tend to be newer groups (formed in the last 2 years) and also groups that have yet to form their own internal rules. In the cases where accessibility of information was rated as an issue, levels of literacy and access to technology were limiting factors. Most groups hold regular meeting (78 percent) 1–3 times a month to discuss business. Few groups meet regularly to conduct collective work (only 11 percent); only 61 percent of groups hold formal general assembly meetings annual or biannually. **Information accessibility and sharing could be enhanced, especially for more newly formed groups, through training or guidelines for reporting procedures supported by NAFPTA or the government. Groups should also be encouraged to hold general assembly meetings.**

Assets

Most groups have access to a smoking kiln, a secure workspace, dry storage space for processed products, a market stall or shop, other post-harvest processing equipment, and land (Figure 9). **Access to assets such as office space, cold storage and raised drying racks could be enhanced either through financial support (grants, loans, in-kind support) or communal spaces made available for groups to access on a rotating or shared basis.**

Figure 9. Most common assets that groups have access to for conducting their small-scale fisheries business and related activities



Value chain activities

All groups reported working in post-harvest processing or trade of fish products, with a small number also working in pre-harvest or harvesting a variety of species (Figure 10a). Small pelagics

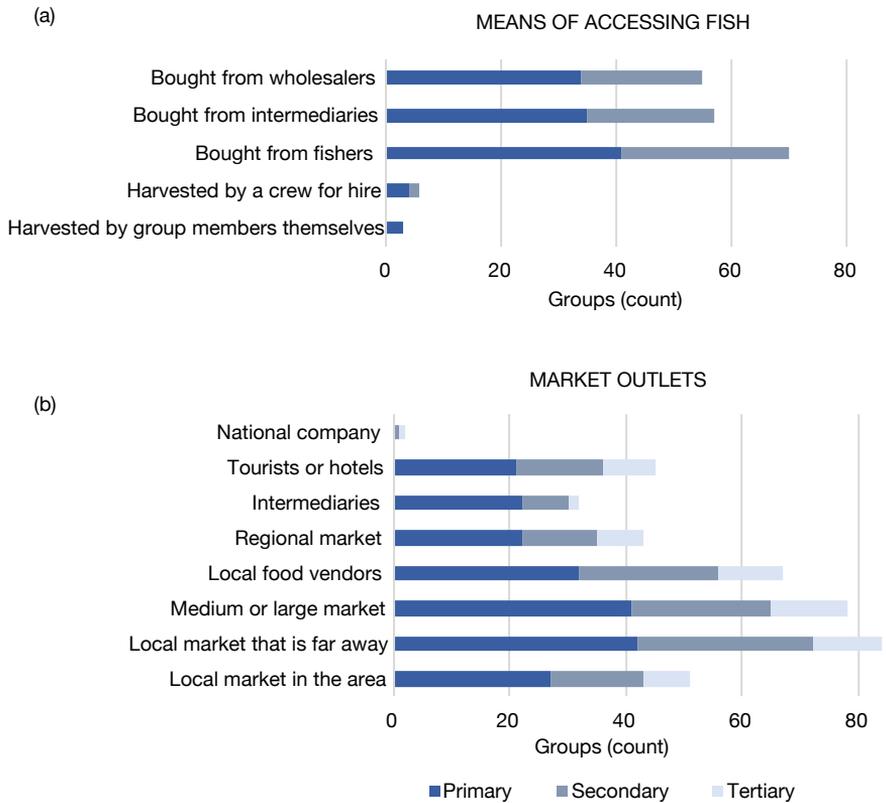
are the species type most groups work with (Figure 10b), followed by medium or large pelagics (65 percent) and demersal fish (33 percent). Small pelagics were ranked as the most important source of income by most groups, and medium or large pelagics were the second most important source of income for most groups as well (Figure 10c). Regardless of the segment of the value chain, work is conducted individually by group members rather than collectively (or a combination of both), except in a few cases where groups share the work of transporting fish or fish products.

Figure 10. Stages of the value chain groups work in (a), most common species types they work with (b), and species ranked by their importance to group income (i.e. “primary species” generates the most income for the group, “secondary” the second-most, etc.) (c)



Groups typically access fish by buying directly from fishers, intermediaries or wholesalers for both their primary and secondary income-earning species (Figure 11a). Outlets for selling fish vary, the most common (for all species) being local markets far away (more than 2 hours travel), medium or large national markets and local food vendors, followed by local markets in the area (Figure 11b). Thus, women’s small-scale fisheries groups rely on a variety of market outlets to sell a range of value-added fish products.

Figure 11. How groups access fish (a) and where they sell it (b), by species ranking (e.g. primary income-earner, secondary, etc.). Information on the means of accessing tertiary fish species was not available

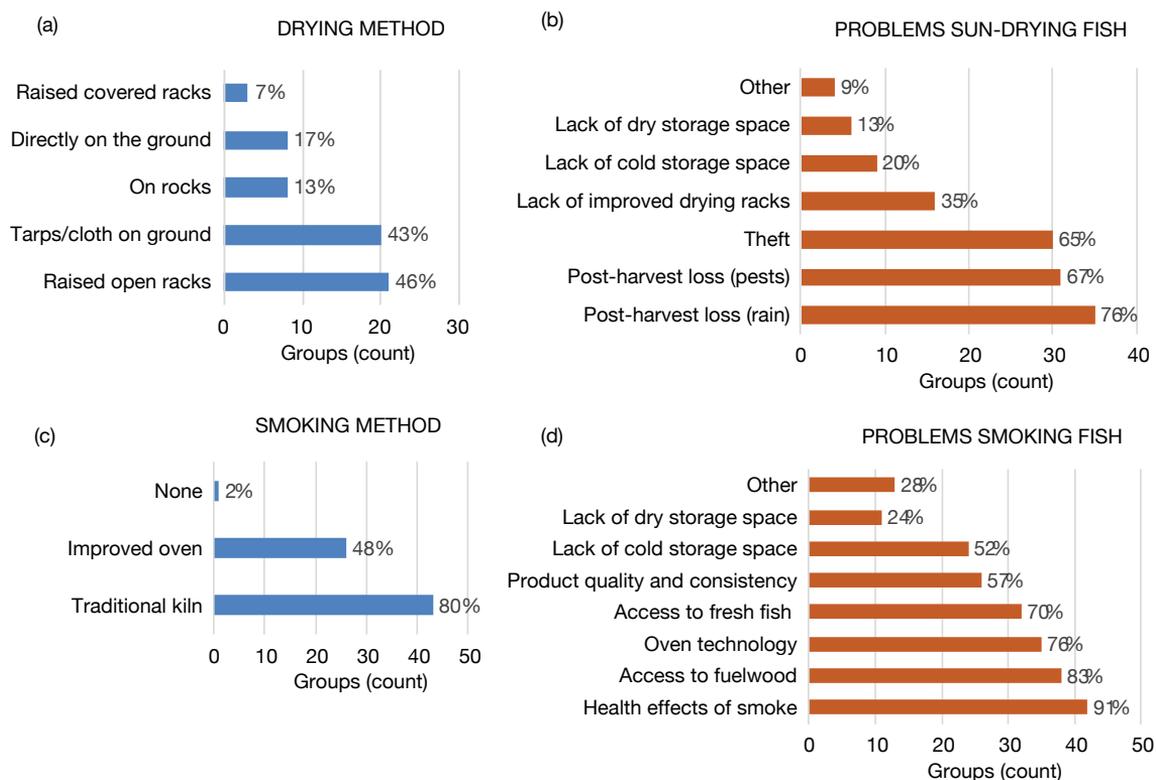


Post-harvest processing

In post-harvest processing, groups dry fish in a variety of ways (Figure 12a), including with raised open racks (46 percent), on tarps or cloth on the ground (43 percent) or directly on the ground (17 percent), or on rocks (13 percent). Raised covered racks are not commonly used (only 7 percent of groups). All but one group reported that they experience problems related to sun-drying fish, with the most common problems being post-harvest loss due to rain (76 percent), post-harvest loss due to pests (67 percent), theft (65 percent), and lack of access to improved drying racks (35 percent), among others (Figure 12b).

When smoking fish, most groups use traditional kilns (80 percent), but many also use improved ovens (38 percent) or both types of ovens (Figure 12c). All but one group reported problems when smoking fish, the most common problems being negative health effects due to smoke exposure (91 percent), access to or price of fuelwood (83 percent), lack of access to improved ovens (76 percent), competition when buying fish (70 percent), consistency of product quality (57 percent), and lack of cold storage space (52 percent – Figure 12d). Technological improvements in post-harvest processing would help groups address their current post-harvest processing challenges. For example, access to raised drying racks would help address post-harvest losses and theft. Given the high reliance on traditional kilns and simultaneous high incidence of problems with smoke exposure, increasing access to improved ovens and better ventilation when smoking fish would help address these limitations.

Figure 12. Technologies used and problems experienced when sun-drying (a, b) and smoking fish (c, d). Responses to each question were not mutually exclusive (i.e. groups could list more than one method used or problem experienced), and so percentages of groups giving a response add up to more than 100 percent for each



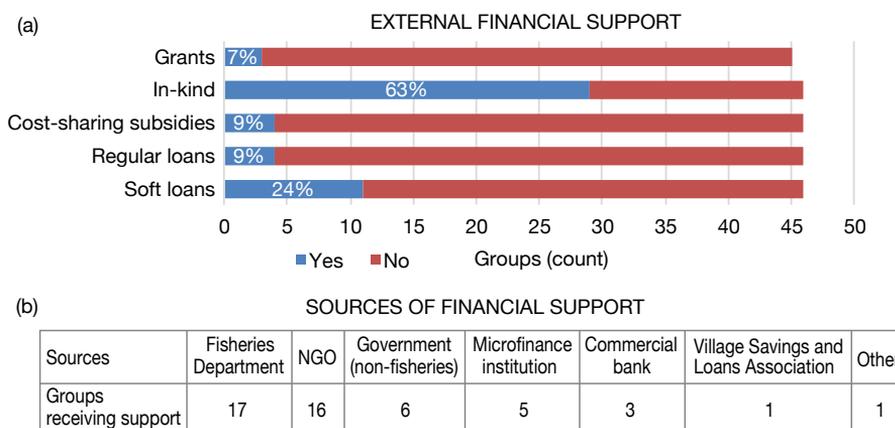
Finances

Groups vary in how they divide profits or income earned. In most groups (62 percent), individuals keep their profits from the sale of fishery activities and make regular financial contributions to the group (through dues or as a percentage of sales), while one-third of groups are structured such that individuals retain profits and only make contributions to the group account as needed. A small number of groups (7 percent) put all profits in the group account and disburse this money to members later (thus functioning as a savings and credit group). Sources of group income vary, with most groups having more than one source, the most common being regular member contributions (87 percent of groups), followed by members making contributions as needed (57 percent) and other sources, including registration fees, fines and NGO support (15 percent). External financial support was not a common source of group income; several groups reported no active income sources.

The most common forms of external financial support received are in-kind support, followed by soft loans (Figure 13a), while the most common sources of financial support are the Fisheries Department and NGOs (Figure 13b). Access to grants, regular loans, and cost-sharing or subsidies are not common. When asked about their degree of financial dependent and sufficiency, the most common group response was “somewhat dependent on outside support” followed by “completely dependent”. Not many groups considered themselves financially independent and self-sufficient. Most groups reported (70 percent) that financial records are available to regular members to review.

Given the young age of groups and low propensity for outside financial support thus far, better access to external sources of financial support may help groups become more firmly established and help them accomplish their goals. Along with this, groups should be encouraged to practice financial transparency and keep good financial records which are available for members to review.

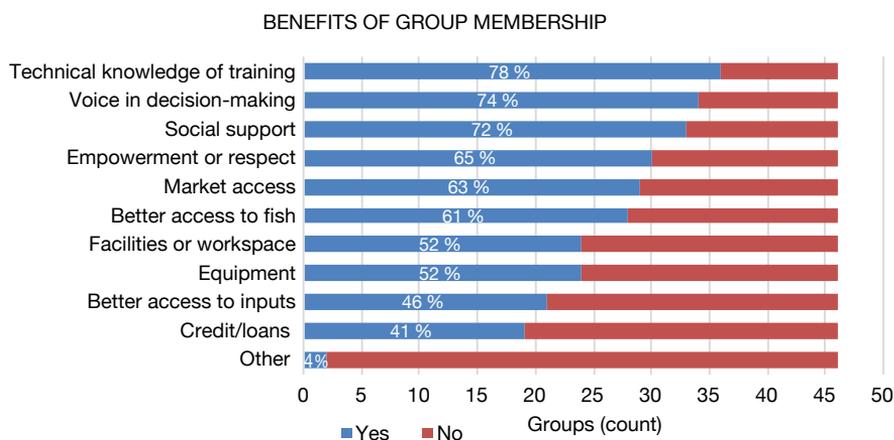
Figure 13. The types (a) and sources (b) of external financial support groups have received



Membership benefits, group strengths and barriers to success

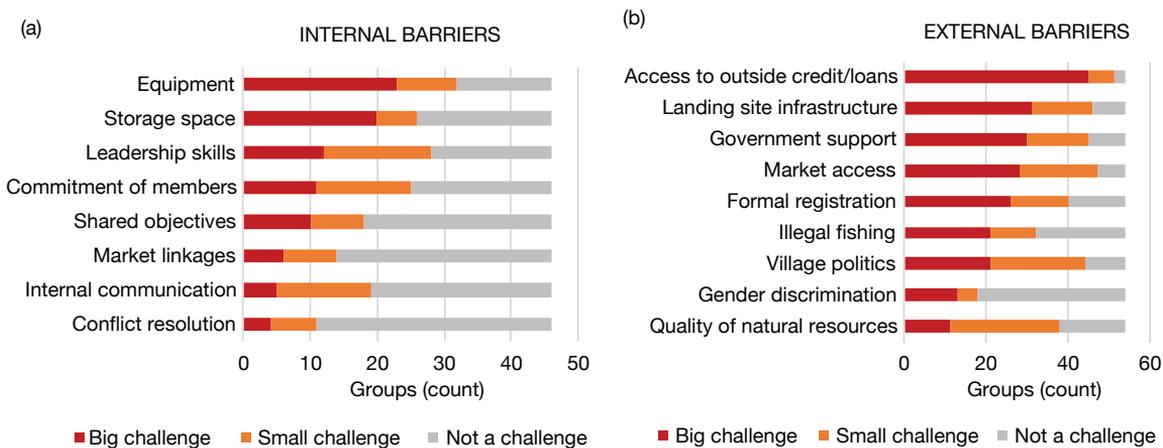
Reported benefits of group membership include access to technical knowledge and training (78 percent), a voice to engage in decision-making (74 percent), social support (72 percent), and empowerment (65 percent), among many others (Figure 14). Groups reported that their main strengths are unity or togetherness, strong social support and commitment to each other’s mutual welfare, and transparency and information sharing. However, several groups indicated they were either too new or currently inactive, and had no strengths. The most common group achievements were securing soft loans, providing access to office space or workspace, acquisition of equipment, and training provided to members in bookkeeping and financial management, although many groups did not have a concrete achievement yet to report.

Figure 14. The different types of benefits individuals receive from membership in their group



The most common internal barriers were related to inadequate access to equipment and facilities (e.g. storage space) followed by barriers posed by internal group dynamics such as leadership skills, commitment of members, and shared objectives (Figure 15a). The most common external barriers reported were illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and inadequate government support, with nearly every group listing these as a “big challenge” (Figure 15). Other common external challenges are poor landing site infrastructure, lack of access to external credit or loans, the quality of natural resources or availability of fish, and gender discrimination. While less common, formal registration is still a challenge for many groups (particularly for those who were formed more recently) and village politics are often not supportive of groups in many cases. Many of the major internal barriers could be addressed to enhance group capacity, such as through access to equipment (e.g. raised drying racks, ovens) and storage space, and leadership skills training. Many of the external barriers experienced are significant and complex problems without simple solutions, but more consistent government support and access to credit or loans could still be addressed, as well as assistance with formal group registration.

Figure 15. How groups rate different potential internal (a) and external (b) barriers that limit their capacity



External linkages

Most groups (80 percent) reported that their group is already a member of a higher-level group (Figure 16). The majority (36 groups) are members of NAFPTA, with 2 groups that are members of CEWEFIA (a regional group). Most of these groups (76 percent) reported that they benefit from their membership in higher-level groups, with benefits including access to training (e.g. on financial management, administration, food safety and value addition), access to technology (e.g. improved ovens or pans), increased savings or access to loans, information on alternative livelihoods, and services such as access to markets or logistical assistance.

The groups who did not perceive any benefits from their membership in a wider platform or umbrella group typically indicated that their connection to the higher-level group was either new or pending, or that their own group was itself disorganized, thus preventing their full participation in the platform organization. However, there were also isolated complaints of either training being offered at inopportune times or financial assistance being promised but never received. Further, qualitative responses captured a range of criticisms about NAFPTA, including that it was formed in a top-down

manner and is not a grassroots organization, that its district and regional representatives are not knowledgeable or able to organize their areas, and also that promises that dues-paying members would have access to loans did not materialize. Still, of the groups that are not already connected to a higher-level group, eight out of nine said they would like to join a higher-level group and believed they would benefit from joining one. About one-half of groups have participated in a learning exchange with another group and more than one-half of groups reported that they are in regular contact with other women’s small-scale fisheries groups (Figure 17). **Strengthening linkages between local-level groups and higher-level (district, regional, national) groups is a critical opportunity to enhance the capacity of organizations at all levels, as nearly all groups either already are members or want to become members of higher-level groups.** However, given the concerns raised that NAFPTA is not a grassroots organization, it will need to enhance its legitimacy and engagement with existing groups to improve its responsiveness and follow-through on providing access to loans. Training should be provided to strengthen local and regional leadership and ensure that the organization is representing its constituencies. Better established groups should engage with NAFPTA so that they can be called on to lead peer exchanges and training within the network. Once strengthened, these higher-level groups would be well-positioned to provide training, facilitate learning exchanges, and disseminate information and services to local women’s small-scale fisheries groups.

Figure 16. Membership in higher-level umbrella groups and perceived benefits

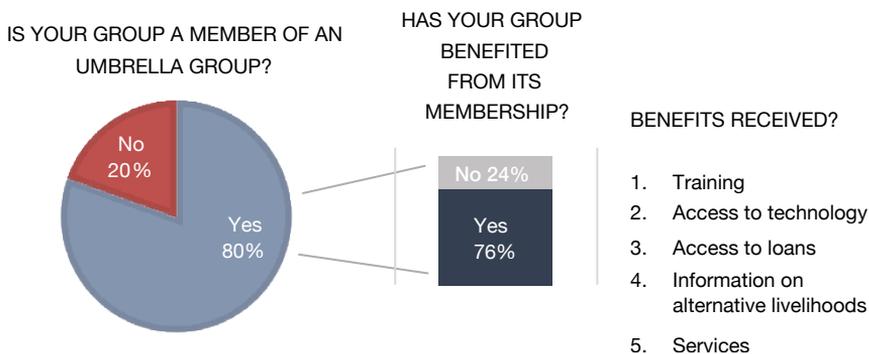
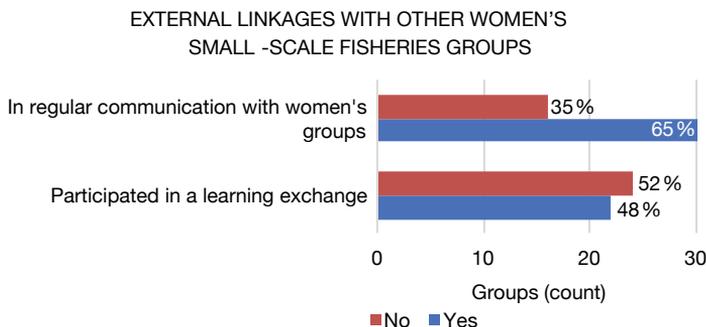


Figure 17. Contact and participation in learning exchanges with other women’s small-scale fisheries groups



Participation in fisheries governance and access to extension services

Most groups have participated in formal fisheries governance activities, the most common being a consultation or formal decision-making process (63 percent of groups) or a study of alternative processing methods (57 percent), among others (Figure 18). Only 11 percent of groups had not participated in any formal fisheries governance activity. About 70 percent of groups reported receiving regular or less regular technical outreach support from the government through phone contact, field visits, and through invitations to meetings or training events (Figure 19a). However, more than one-quarter of groups do not receive any technical outreach services from the government. Groups preferred a mix of methods to receive technical outreach support from the government, especially field visits and invitations to meetings or training events (Figure 19b). Currently, very few groups (n = 3) report that they regularly provide annual reports of their activities to the government. There is an opportunity to increase the frequency of technical outreach services provided by the government so that such contact occurs on a more regular basis (e.g. seasonal contact), using a combination of methods (phone contact, field visits, training). In addition, coverage of groups should be consistent so that some groups are not left out of the network of government contact.

Figure 18. Different types of fisheries governance activities (beyond the group’s internal governance) that women’s small-scale fisheries groups have participated in

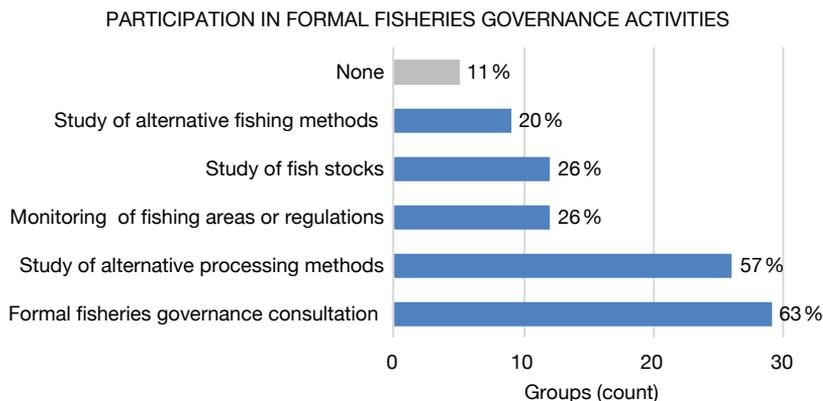
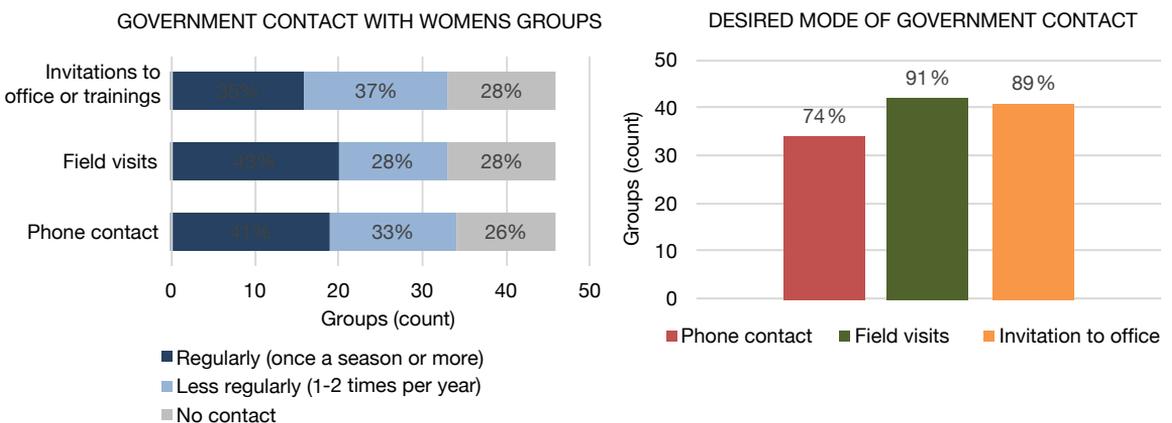


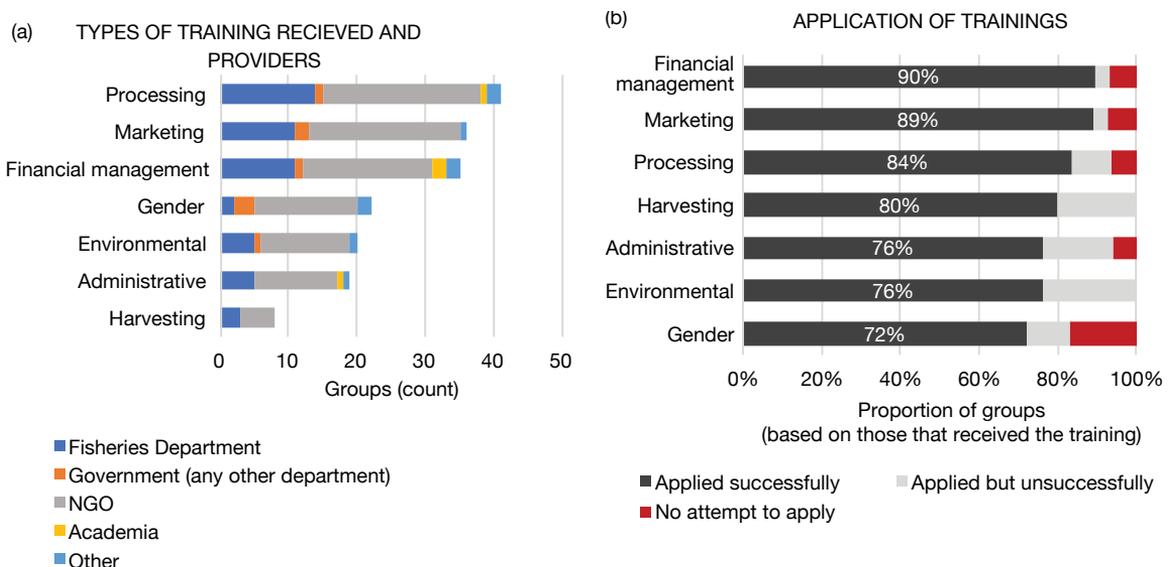
Figure 19. The current methods and frequency of government contact with women’s small-scale fisheries groups (a) and the desired mode of contact (b)



Training

More than two-thirds of groups have received some form of technical training, the most common being training on post-harvest processing, marketing, or financial management (Figure 20a). Across all types of training, most groups reported that they were able to successfully apply the knowledge imparted and put it into practice (Figure 20b), although there were slightly lower reported rates of successful application for gender, environmental and administrative training. The main reasons some groups are unable to successfully put training into practice is because they lack access to the technology (e.g. improved ovens or solar dryers) or are unable to utilize these technologies to their full potential (due to lack of logistical knowledge and support). Moreover, in the case of IUU fishing, groups cannot avoid buying illegal or undersized fish if this is what is available to them on the market. The most common institutions providing training are NGOs (60 percent of all training) followed by the Fisheries Department (28 percent). **Technical training events to date have largely been successful, with most groups applying what they have learned. This indicates that training is an effective means to give groups new knowledge and tools, and should therefore be continued to enhance their capacity. Coordination (e.g. NAFPTA) to ensure that the most needed training is being provided, and that different training providers coordinate their efforts, would help make training delivery more efficient. Training should be followed up with support, ensuring groups have access to technologies and the logistical support (e.g. troubleshooting) they need to use them to their full potential.**

Figure 20. Different types of technical training that groups have received and their providers (a), and how successful groups have been in applying knowledge gained from each type of training (b)



Greatest needs

The greatest needs reported by groups, in terms of strengthening the capacity of their organization to do its work, were training on financial literacy (20 percent), leadership (20 percent) and organizational skills or administrative procedures (20 percent), followed by training on processing (13 percent) and access to soft loans (13 percent). Others indicated that a collective facility for



conducting fish processing activities was needed, such as a resource centre which could also be outfitted with a workspace and cold storage technologies, and that could host training events. Given the high demand for financial literacy, leadership, and administrative support, training and guidelines should be provided along these lines to enhance group capacity. There was also a request from several groups for follow-up on training over time. Centres for training and processing at key sites would also help ensure delivery of services and ongoing support.

Appendix 1. Methods

Logistics for data collection

Data collection began by field testing the survey instrument in the Greater Accra region with nine women's small-scale fisheries groups. After the successful pre-testing of the survey, the study was expanded to include six regions, aiming to survey 10 communities and a total of five surveys per community, for approximately 50 surveys in total. A total of 46 surveys were collected in the field (see Table 2), almost meeting the target number of surveys. Data collection took place between 23 September and 5 November.

Inclusion criteria. To be included in the survey, organizations had to meet the following criteria:

- a. The group identifies as an organization, either formally registered or informal.
- b. Membership is majority (more than 50 percent) women.
- c. Women are an active part of the organization's leadership.
- d. The majority of group members are engaged in capture fishing and related activities including pre-harvest, processing, and trade of fish or fish products.

Table 2. Regions and number of surveys collected for the study

Region	Surveys collected
Western	12
Eastern	5
Greater Accra	8
Volta	4
Oti	2
Central	15

Training

Training for data collection was led virtually by the consultant for all data collectors. The four-hour training covered the purpose and scope of the study, the survey questions, and how to arrange for and facilitate surveys.

Survey data collection

Data collection was overseen by the National Project Coordinator in the field, supervising the team of five data collectors conducting the survey. Data was collected by the National Project Coordinator (NPC), Abigail Kanyi, along with a data collection team which included Yaa Danso, Evelyn Quartey, Mensah Samuel and Dorothy Appiah. Data was collected between September and November 2020 in six regions in Ghana: Central, Eastern, Greater Accra, Volta and Oti.

Surveys were administered with 2-3 members from a group, including both executive committee members and regular members, and one member of the data collection team. Group members answered questions from the semi-structured questionnaire collectively responding to group-level characteristics (i.e., not individual characteristics) outdoors, allowing for social distancing. The data collector recorded responses digitally using a phone or tablet and the survey software KoboToolBox and the free app KoboCollect. Surveys took 1-2 hours to complete and were administered outdoors allowing for social distancing. Respondents were introduced to the purpose of the survey and asked for their consent before proceeding; they were also informed of their right to skip any question or end the interview at any time.

Survey instrument

The survey included informed consent language. After consent was granted, enumerators guided participants through questions about their group's history and formation, their objectives, their internal operations (e.g. rules, information sharing, meetings, participation rates, financial structure), external support received, external linkages, barriers, and their greatest needs. To review the survey's development and the survey instrument in full, see the FAO report *A Methodological Guide for Mapping Women's Small-Scale Fishery Organizations to Assess their Capacities and Needs*.

Globally, women perform essential work throughout small-scale fisheries (SSF) food systems, yet much of this work is overlooked. Where women are not seen or acknowledged as important actors in fish value chains, they remain underrepresented in or excluded from formal governance processes and have limited say in decision-making. This lack of visibility hinders women's equal access to needed extension services and assets, such as credit and technology. Forming organizations (e.g., associations, cooperatives, savings, and credit groups) is one means of adapting to gender-specific challenges women face in the sector. Recent high-level commitments outline achieving women's full and effective participation in decision-making and leadership as global governance goals. For example, the dedicated chapter on gender in the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) encourages women's participation in fisheries organizations and their inclusion in monitoring and implementation. In addition, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality includes a target on ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life. But while enhanced access to organizations and decision-making spaces for women is critical for achieving global goals, current research on women's SSF organizations is lacking, leaving gaps in our understanding of existing barriers and opportunities to affect change.

The report provides a national overview of women's SSF organizations, defined as formal and informal organizations engaged in fisheries activities (including pre-harvest, harvest, or post-harvest processing and trade) whose leaders and members are majority women. The study of women's SSF organizations was part of a broader initiative, "Empowering women in SSF for sustainable food systems," through funding provided by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). To support sustainable food systems and nutrition in sub-Saharan Africa, NORAD provided funding for initial project activities in five countries – Ghana, Malawi, Sierra Leone, United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda. With a focus on strengthening women's roles in post-harvest processing and trade, the project aimed to help women both individually and as members of small businesses, professional organizations, and cooperatives to build and improve their skills and capacity to do their work. To attain these goals, an initial empirical assessment of the current landscape of organizations was undertaken as a first step. The report summarizes the results of the mapping assessment survey of women's SSF fisheries organizations carried out, and underscores the diversity of women's fisheries organizations and their present accomplishments and opportunities for governments, research institutions, non-governmental organizations, and private sector actors to support women's SSF organizations in line with the principles of the SSF Guidelines. For an overview of the methodology, see 'A methodological guide for mapping women's SSF organizations to assess their capacities and needs').

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