

**REPORT ON THE OPENING OF THE 5TH OYSTER CLOSED SEASON AND CELEBRATION OF IYFAFA 2022
PROGRAMME**

Prepared by Development Action Association (DAA)



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The occasion was chaired by the Chief Fisherman of Kokrobite, Nii Adotei Acquaye II, who also doubled as the representative of the Ga South Municipal Assembly.

Other invited guests included: Hannah Boakye – Greater Accra Regional Director of Fisheries; Peter Adjei – International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), Benjamin Nyampong – ICSF; Olivia Horvey – Sonal Fisheries officer for the Ga South Municipality; Anthony Wasipe – Fisheries Commission Representative; Promise Hunya and Bernice Bebli – Densu Oyster Pickers Association (DOPA) executives; Sakumo Okyeame and Rebecca Ayi – Nii Bortianor; Lydia Sasu – Executive Director of Development Action Association (DAA); Emelia Notey – DAA Fisheries Training Centre (DFTC); Sandra Sasu – DAA; and Elias Akakpo – DAA.

In his opening remarks, Nii Adotei Acquaye II expressed his gratitude to all for the opportunity to chair the occasion. He also acknowledged the presence of all invited guests and participants and congratulated DOPA for their efforts. He pleaded the indulgence of all to help make the programme a success.



The Chairman of the occasion, Nii Adotei Acquaye, addressing the audience

Madam Lydia Sasu, expressed her joy at the presence of all the invited guests who honoured the occasion and how DOPA has been consistent in the co-management of the Densu Delta to continuously observe a five-month closed season for the past five years. She added that there are videos available on hygienic fish processing (smart fish), courtesy of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which will be shown to fishers at any given opportunity.



Madam Lydia Sasu (DAA) welcoming participants

Miss Forgive Akakpo stated that the closed season started five years ago. She also thanked God for the long life to observe their 5th Closed Season. At the end of every month, DOPA and the local youth clean the beach and the community together.



Forgive Akakpo speaking on behalf of DOPA

WHY AN INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF ARTISANAL FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE (IYAFA)?

Madam Emelia Nortey was called to read the vision of the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA). This she did by interpreting in the local languages to benefit all. Below is the Article.

“The global food system faces many complex challenges, including hunger, malnutrition and diet-related diseases, an ever-growing global population that needs sufficient and healthy food, the need to reduce food loss and waste, the depletion of natural resources and effects of climate change, as well as the effects of the current COVID-19 pandemic. Fish, molluscs, crustaceans and aquatic plants are fundamental, essential and indispensable foods eaten by people around the world as part of healthy diets, cultural heritage and culinary tradition. Small-scale artisanal fishers and fish farmers produce a large portion of this food, and as such, IYAFA 2022 is an opportunity to highlight the importance of small-scale artisanal fisheries and aquaculture for our food systems, livelihoods, culture and the environment. Small-scale fishers, fish farmers and fish workers hold enormous potential to promote transformative changes in how, by whom and for whom fish and fishery products are produced, processed and distributed – with positive ripple effects felt throughout the global food system.

IYAFA 2022 aims to raise awareness on the role of small-scale fisheries and aquaculture, strengthen science-policy interaction, empower stakeholders to take action, and to build new and strengthen existing partnerships. IYAFA 2022 can also act as a springboard towards implementing the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and related documents, like the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, and take concrete actions towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as we enter the last decade of action to achieve the 2030 Agenda. It also falls within the UN Decade of Family Farming, the two observances will reinforce one another in providing greater visibility to small-scale artisanal fishers, fish farmers and fish workers.

Let’s work together for a world in which small-scale artisanal fishers, fish farmers and fish workers are fully recognized and empowered to continue their contributions for human well-being, food systems and poverty alleviation through the responsible and sustainable use of fisheries and aquaculture resources.”



Madam Emelia Nortey interpreting about the importance of IYAFA in the Local Dialects

BEST PRACTICES PRESENTATION

Madam Lydia Sasu informed the group that food security is very key to the world. Everyone gathered agreed that fish brought from the sea should be handled in a hygienic way. She therefore called on participants to share their views on the need for safety in fishery practices and to share their experiences with the group.

Mr. Adote Acquayei stated that fishermen went to sea at different times. Some went at dawn, some in the morning and some in the afternoon. What, in his view, is the problem is how these fish are caught. He emphasized that if the process of catching is questionable, it affects the fish and makes them unhygienic.

Madam Adoley of Bortinaor stated that when oysters are brought home from the river they are thoroughly washed before being cooked. This makes the oysters safe for consumption and people from all walks of life come to buy the oysters.



Madam Adoley AB Sharing how oysters are safely handled during processing

Madam Lydia Sasu probed how rubbish gets into the sea and the Densu river. Miss Bebli of Tsokomey replied that rubbish is collected from the environment into the river and the sea whenever it rains. In order to curb sickness and catching unsafe fish, as members of DOPA they clean the community every month. Madam Lydia added that when fishermen take sachet water to sea, they also drop the plastic into the sea. It was agreed that rubbish should be disposed of well to prevent it from getting swept up into the sea and river whenever it rains. The fishermen were advised not to drop their empty sachets into the river, but rather bring it home to avoid polluting the water bodies.

SOLIDARITY MESSAGES

District Assembly

Mr. Acquaye commended the Densu Oyster Pickers Association for their hard work and unity in observing the oyster closed season for five years. He added that oysters are very nutritious and therefore encouraged the members of DOPA to continue to put in much effort to harvest them. He emphasized that oyster picking can act as an alternative livelihood and source of food whenever the sea is closed.

Dagavi Wemega, a fish processor from Tsokomey, stated that there is a training centre where fishworkers receive training in their fish businesses and they have all benefited from such trainings. There is also the Densu Oyster Pickers Association, which has been functioning for a very long time especially with the closed season.



Dagavi Wemega, from Tsokomey, sharing the proper way of handling fish

Hagar Quartey stated that, since the inception of the VSLA by DAA, their daily contributions have been a source of funds that they can fall back on whenever they are in need. She encouraged them all to keep it up.

Bernice Bebli, a representative from DOPA, stated that the inception of the closed season was not easy. However, it became successful and is now into its 5th year. They have a co-management committee that oversees their activities, and ensures that the river is clean, since the oysters don't do well with pollution. They also regularly check the temperature and salinity of the water.



Bernice Bebli speaking on behalf of DOPA

She added that DOPA should be recognized by the Fisheries Commission and the Fisheries Ministries. DOPA has come to stay and hence they should be included in meetings and decision-making processes. The empty shells of the oysters can be used for feed for fowls and they earn money from selling their shells. She petitioned the Fisheries Commission and Ministries to invite them for meetings and conferences as well as supporting them during the closed season.

The members of the co-management committee were called upon. They informed the house that they are a 15-member committee and they oversee the affairs of the DOPA.

Nii Bortianor's representatives commended DOPA for how far they had come in the closed season and encouraged them to keep up the good work.

Peter Adjei – International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF)

Mr. Adjei of ICSF gave a brief history about the organization. ICSF focuses on equitability and human rights issues in small-scale fisheries. The late Chandrika Sharma of ICSF had visited Tsokomey Fish Processors almost 20 years ago, and the relationship between the community and ICSF has been maintained ever since. Their collaborative work also contributed to the development of the *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries* (SSF Guidelines). He highlighted the need to emphasize the importance of best practices in fishing and processing work, as well as the need to avoid unsafe practices.



Mr. Peter Adjei of ICSF giving his solidarity message

DENSU OPENING

Mr. Promise Hunya and Bernice Bebli officially opened the Densu River for oyster picking. Miss Bebli advised that oysters with a minimum size of 7 cms can be picked, however the ones that are smaller in size should be left in the river.



The official opening of the oyster picking season

Regional Director

Madam Hannah Boakye, the Regional Fisheries Director was called upon to address the group. Her speech is attached below.



Madam Hannah Boakye – the Greater Accra Regional Director of Fisheries delivering her speech

VOTE OF THANKS

Miss Cecelia Sesu thanked God for good weather, she thanked the Regional Director, Chief Fishermen and the members of DOPA for their support and effort for a successful opening and launch.

Closing Prayer: Hagar Quartey

Time ended: 3pm

Conclusion

In Conclusion, the committee and the co-management members agreed that the oyster closed season will begin on 30 April each year and this date is fixed. Members are to observe the hygienic handling of fish, as well as observing environmental hygiene and working as a team to observe the closed season each year.

SPEECH BY REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF FISHERIES, FISHERIES COMMISSION, MINISTRY OF FISHERIES AND AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT, AT THE OPENING OF OYSTER FISHERY CLOSED SEASON CEREMONY AT THE DENSU DELTA AT TSOKOMEY IN THE GA SOUTH MUNICIPAL ON 30TH APRIL, 2022.

Mr. Chairman,

The Representative of the DCE of GA South,

Heads of other Institutions and Associations,

Executives & Members of Densu Oyster Pickers Association (DOPA)

Heads of the Fisheries Commission

Nananom, Nii Mei, Naa Mei

Distinguished Invited Guests

The press

Ladies & Gentlemen

I wish to use this opportunity to welcome you all to this all-important event, the second Observation of Oyster Fishery Closed Season Ceremony here at Densu Delta.

Early management measures to Co-manage the Oyster Fishery necessitated the preparation of the Densu Delta Oyster Fishery Community Co-Management Plan. Some of the measures into the plan was implemented by the Co-Management Committee on behalf of the entire membership of Densu Oyster Pickers Association (DOPA).

Important among the measures in the plan was the observance of biological management measure to ensure a sustainable Oyster harvesting.

Mr. Chairman,

Any challenge faced by these members would affect their commitment directly to this observance.

The observance of this important biological management measure to ensure a sustainable oyster harvesting in the Densu Delta in no doubt should continue to enjoy full support and so their challenges are to be managed well.

The 5th closed season observed last year did not only result in a boost in the oyster population but also led to increase in size and density.

Mr. Chairman,

It is heart-warming to inform you that the Greater Accra Regional Office of the Commission is already working closely with the Co-management Committee of this Association and this collaboration is to help the co-management to succeed.

It is our hope and believe that, the lesson learned from past years Densu Delta Oyster Fishery closed season and that of this year will consolidate positive opinion toward the implementation of the upcoming National Marine Closed Season for Artisanal and Inshore fleet.

On behalf of the Hon. minister and on my own behalf, I express our appreciation to the Co-Management Committee for the technical and material support they have so far placed at the disposal of the Association.

On this note, Mr. Chairman,

I thank you all for coming and wish this effort for the sustainable Management of the Oyster Fishery an everlasting success.

Thank you.



Some of the participants



Members of the DOPA co-management group



The invited guests



Madam Olivia Horvey – Zonal Fisheries Officer for the Ga South Municipality