

# Ocean Country Partnership Programme

## Review of MPA Awareness Initiatives and Marine Educational Tools in Ghana

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## Glossary of Terms

**Awareness raising:** Initiatives to educate stakeholders, including local communities, legislators, and the general public.

**Behavioral Nudges:** Subtle cues or reminders, such murals with conservation themes or slogans, to persuade stakeholders to embrace practices.

**Communication Tools:** Materials for conveying messages, including visual aids include posters, billboards, infographics, and murals, community dramas, songs, and radio jingles. Digital tools include websites, social media posts, and mobile apps.

**Communication Channels:** The channels by which messages are delivered to specific audiences. Print, television, and radio are examples of traditional channels. Digital channels include websites, online forums, and social media sites. Town hall meetings, durbars, and cultural festivals are examples of community-based channels.

**Educational Resources:** Content created to inform interested parties about the advantages of MPAs and marine conservation. Books and manuals on ethical fishing methods and marine biodiversity-focused school curricula are two examples. Audio-visual materials including training films and documentaries.

**Feedback Mechanisms:** Methods for gathering and integrating community input into conservation plans to keep them current and successful.

**Impact Monitoring:** Instruments and procedures for assessing how well outreach initiatives and awareness-raising campaigns accomplish conservation objectives.

**Key Messages:** Concise declarations outlining the main objectives of marine conservation. Examples are "Protect our oceans to protect our livelihoods", "Sustainable fish stocks are ensured by marine protected areas, "Illegal fishing is harmful".

**Multimedia Campaigns:** Integrated campaigns that reach a variety of audiences and increase awareness-raising efforts by utilizing a variety of media (such as radio, television, and social media).

**Outreach:** Arranged events intended to directly involve stakeholders and communities in marine conservation initiatives. Public awareness campaigns, educational initiatives, and community gatherings are a few examples.

**Participatory Approaches:** Techniques that encourage ownership and accountability by incorporating stakeholders, particularly local populations, in the planning and execution of conservation projects.

**Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC):** An intentional theory and scientific driven approach that uses engagement and customized message to change attitudes and behaviours in favour of sustainable activities.

**Stakeholder Engagement:** To guarantee inclusion and cooperation, all pertinent parties (such as fishermen, processors, legislators, and non-governmental organizations) are involved in marine conservation initiatives.

**Tactics:** Particular strategies or techniques used to successfully engage audiences and accomplish communication objectives. Examples are storytelling, co-design activities, interactive engagements, behavioural nudges, etc.

**Targeted Outreach:** Outreach initiatives tailored to the particular needs and roles of particular groups, such as women, youth, or policymakers.

## List of Acronyms

CaFGOAG	Canoe and Fishing Gear Owners Association of Ghana
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EJF	Environmental Justice Foundation
FC	Fisheries Commission
FoN	Friends of the Nation
HM	Hen Mpoano
IUU	Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
MESTI	Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology, and Innovation
MLNR	Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources (MLNR)
MoFAD	Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development
NAFPTA	National Fish Processors and Traders Association
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SFPA	Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements
WACA	West Africa Coastal Areas
WARFP	West Africa Regional Fisheries Programme
WB	World Bank
WD	Wildlife Division
WIOMSA	Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association

# 1. Introduction

Education and awareness-raising are essential instruments for promoting sustainable development and behavioural change (Tilbury, 2011). They represent tools for bridging scientific knowledge, policy development, and community engagement in the context of marine conservation (Bennett, and Satterfield, 2018). Effective communication of marine conservation activities helps stakeholders understand and advocate for sustainable practices and policies (Cvitanovic, McDonald, and Hobday, 2016). The conduct of education and awareness-raising activities in marine conservation has historically evolved along with conservation practices in many African nations. Early conservation efforts were founded on traditional ecological knowledge that had been passed down through the centuries (Diawuo and Issifu, 2015). This knowledge is an embodiment of customs, taboos, and rituals that constitute unspoken guidelines that safeguarded certain marine life and habitats. There has been an evolution from traditional methods of communicating conservation knowledge and action to contemporary awareness-raising activities in Africa, which make use of modern resources such as community-based management programs, and environmental education campaigns. For instance, campaigns aimed at the prevention of fish harvesting during particular seasons are delivered by fisheries managers and targeted at fisher folk constituents. Such educational campaigns support knowledge building on fish population regeneration and on ways to ensure sustainability. (Barendse *et al.*, 2023).

Organizations such as the Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA) have spearheaded initiatives to incorporate scientific and indigenous knowledge into marine conservation programs by facilitating interdisciplinary collaborations between scientists, local communities and policy makers. Such an approach strengthens the effectiveness of conservation interventions by fostering local ownership and aligning modern conservation practices with long-standing traditional stewardship practices (Obura *et al.*, 2017). Initiatives aimed at increasing marine awareness in Ghana have historically been based on cultural practices embedded in taboos and traditional norms. These traditions serve as informal frameworks for protecting maritime resources. For instance, certain fishing locations were designated sacred, which prohibited fishing on specific days (Diawuo and Issifu, 2015). These taboos were enforced via the use of spiritual beliefs, which promoted community compliance and protected marine environments. Ghana's present awareness-raising efforts are mostly focused on integrating traditional practices with scientific research and policy.

Designing successful educational and awareness-raising initiatives requires an understanding of the historical and cultural context. Substantial education and awareness raising activities around marine resources conservation have been undertaken by a variety of stakeholders in Ghana. Despite this, substantial challenges such as overfishing, unlawful activities, and limited compliance with conservation regulations continue to impact upon the sustainability of Ghana's maritime sector. The deterioration of marine ecosystems is widespread while the need to address food insecurity due to dwindling



seafood systems has heightened. To confront these challenges, this review aims to evaluate the effectiveness of previous marine environmental education and awareness raising initiatives in Ghana, pinpoint deficiencies, and recommend improvements to support future initiatives.

This review is organized in five chapters. Chapter 1, described above, explores Ghana's approach to environmental and conservation awareness campaigns, describing the historical and contemporary initiatives that have influenced them. In Chapter 2, the breadth and effects of earlier MPA awareness campaigns and educational resources are examined according to their target audiences, educational tools, and awareness-raising tactics. It also assesses the effectiveness of these programs by taking into account their coverage and scope. Chapter 3 examines the current practice of MPA education in Ghana. The chapter emphasizes awareness coverage, information distribution, and the longevity of tactics used in previous projects, with a focus on high-level shortcomings. It describes the difficulties in filling these gaps and makes recommendations for how to do so. In Chapter 4, proposals for the creation of a national framework for MPA education and awareness creation are the main discussion topics. Chapter 5 presents the main summaries for education and awareness raising. The significance of the suggested national framework for directing upcoming MPA awareness and education initiatives is reaffirmed in this section.

## **2. Scope, Gaps and impact of previous MPA awareness-raising efforts and marine educational materials**

Prior efforts to raise awareness of MPA and marine conservation in Ghana have been spearheaded by a wide range of stakeholders, including international organizations, government agencies, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and development partners. The following sections detail out the scope and effectiveness of past MPA awareness-raising initiatives and marine educational resources.

### **2.1. Scope of Previous MPA Awareness Raising Initiatives**

#### **2.1.1. Scope of Government-led Awareness Raising Programmes**

The Government of Ghana (GoG) has led a number of awareness-raising campaigns and encouraged knowledge sharing among important stakeholders on sustainable marine resource management and marine conservation through its Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (MoFAD) and Fisheries Commission (FC), the Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology, and Innovation (MESTI) and its Environmental

Protection Agency (EPA), the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources (MLNR) and its Forestry Commission (FC), and the Wildlife Division (WD).

Specifically, these initiatives address issues of environmental preservation, wildlife conservation, and sustainable fisheries management. Initiatives led by the MoFAD/FC have made strategic use of international day celebrations such as World Oceans Day 2024 (see Figure 1), World Fisheries Day, and the International Day against Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing. Messages packaged and delivered by the MoFAD/FC and targeted at fishers in fishing communities include themes spanning sustainable fishing methods and hygienic fish handling and processing. Likewise, MESTI/EPA, FC, and WD have leveraged World Environment Day, World Mangroves Day, International Forest Day, World Wildlife Day, Earth Day, World Wetlands Day, and International Day for Biological Activities to promote awareness raising on the importance of marine resource sustainability.

Specifically, the Public Relations Unit of the WD conducts educational campaigns in schools, churches, and local communities and among key stakeholders, like hunters, wildlife traders, and media, to get them all aligned to the Division's mission and goals and also in conformity to international standards, laws, and treaties. Key outreach strategies utilized by all government institutions include durbars which is a ceremonial event that serves as forum for communal engagement, face-to-face meetings, public seminars and lectures, social media posts, press statements, clean-up, and tree planting activities.



Photos Courtesy Hen Mpoano (2024).

**Figure 1: Scenes from the 2024 World Ocean Day Celebration sponsored by USAID**

To accomplish key awareness-raising objectives, government institutions utilize a variety of outreach techniques such as durbars, open forums, and face-to-face meetings to engage resource users and the general public. In order to amplify the reach of messages to a wide audience, traditional media, including print publications, television, and national and local radio, have also been utilized. Additionally, social media sites like Facebook are increasingly utilized to interact with younger people in both rural and urban settings. Public gatherings like tree-planting drives, clean-up campaigns, and exhibits give communities hands-on opportunities to get involved in conservation efforts. The government also runs sensitization campaigns at places of worship, schools, and community centres.

These campaigns rely on a variety of educational materials to be successful. Posters, jingles, animations, and publications are examples of educational materials that are intended to educate and motivate people to take action. However, such materials are commonly funded by bilateral and multilateral agencies such as the World Bank (WB), and FAO or development partners like USAID. For instance, in the fisheries sector, it is not uncommon for awareness raising materials to be co-branded by a donor agency and MoFAD/FC. Consequently, donor agency goals tend to influence government-led awareness-raising programmes. Additionally, the efficacy of government campaigns is sometimes hindered by financial limitations as GoG mainly depends on donors leading to inconsistent messages, uncoordinated campaigns, and inadequate community involvement.



Regarding the fishing industry, while these programs have brought attention to mostly fisheries-related concerns, obstacles including insufficient enforcement systems have hindered their ability to result in observable behavioural change. Additionally, the methods that have been employed have not produced many real effects. Fishermen, for instance, have believed that government departments do not consciously include them in the creation of campaigns and materials that raise awareness in the community. Their overall sentiments suggest a method where they are "*talked at*," rather than engaging in polite, reciprocal dialogue. This can be linked to the potential prejudice of government department personnel, who may see fishermen as inherently troublesome and uncooperative. This bias may cloud the view of the officers, creating judgments that hinder respectful conversations where fishers are listened to and respected. This assertion was held by fishers who were engaged in a participatory action media project held by GFRA on MPA awareness raising and education.

### 2.1.2. Scope of Awareness Raising Programmes of Development Partners

The active participation of development partners including USAID, the WB, the European Union (EU), the Korean and Norwegian governments in marine awareness raising has benefited Ghana over the years. Through a variety of programs, events, and resources, these bilateral and multi-lateral institutions have made a substantial contribution to marine conservation and attempts to raise awareness of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

Ghana's marine conservation has long been a priority for USAID, which has expanded its attention through several initiatives. USAID funded the Integrated Coastal and Fisheries Governance (ICFG) Initiative (2009–2013), locally dubbed Hen Mpoano (Our Coast), which sought to lay the groundwork for nested fisheries and coastal governance in Ghana's Western region. This initiative laid emphasis on resource management strategies that fostered participation amongst local actors (USAID, 2013).

Activities included workshops to enhance local stakeholders' capacity, community-led conservation initiatives, and the creation of Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) plans. Between 2014–2020, USAID funded the Sustainable Fisheries Management Project (SFMP) which focused on themes around restoring fish stocks, reducing illegal fishing, and enhancing the socio-economic wellbeing of coastal people through co-management strategies (USAID, 2020). SFMP did extensive awareness raising at the community and national levels. Community level awareness raising were pronounced in estuarine fishing communities, notably, within the Ankobra River, Pra River and Densu Delta communities. The strategies utilized at the community level were mainly community engagements, production and dissemination of posters and infographics, researches, documentaries, production and airing of jingles, animations on community channels such as community radio.

Again, the themes were further reinforced via video presentations in coastal villages. Such a strategy ensured outreach and message delivery on sustainable fishing to last-mile communities. At the national level, engaging workshops with national leaders and

stakeholders in the fishing industry promoted discussion on governance issues and increased confidence between regulators and communities (World Bank, 2019; World Bank, 2020). The ICFG chalked up successes but also faced significant obstacles. While community workshops fostered trust and encouraged adherence to important legislation, their culturally sensitive approach guaranteed the lessons' accessibility and relevancy. Additionally, regional cooperation strengthened the anti-IUU fishing campaign by uniting West African nations. However, in places where illegal fishing was common, ingrained economic situations impeded behavioural change, and financing constraints limited the scope of programs, leaving some populations underserved. Additionally, the ICFG Initiative's reliance on donors made it difficult to sustain awareness-raising momentum after it ended. In order to guarantee the sustainability of awareness campaigns, these experiences emphasize the significance of including local leadership and creating long-term, community-driven projects (World Bank, 2020).

The World Bank has additionally made significant efforts to assist Ghana with marine conservation and sustainable management of coastal resources. From 2018, the West Africa Coastal Areas (WACA) Resilience Investment Project has tackled pollution, flooding, and coastline erosion in Ghana and other West African nations (World Bank, 2022) through socioeconomic analyses, community education, and coastal engineering solutions. In order to advance marine conservation research, education, and capacity building, the World Bank teamed up with University of Cape Coast's Centre for Coastal Management (World Bank, 2023). Activities were primarily focused on hazards and risk assessments of coastal areas in the Volta region and included community engagement, and the creation of management plans for coastal wetlands. Furthermore, through multimedia campaigns and community workshops, the World Bank's West Africa Regional Fisheries Programme (WARFP) has helped raise awareness on important topics including MPAs, closed seasons, and alternative livelihoods (World Bank, 2020).

Through its Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements (SFPAs), the European Union (EU) has also been a major advocate for marine conservation in Ghana to protect marine biodiversity and encourage sustainable resource use. The EU has financed research on fish stock assessments, arranged training programs for fishermen to adopt sustainable methods, and led workshops on biodiversity conservation (European Commission, 2021). Its efforts have been supplemented by the distribution of policy papers to direct fisheries governance, interactive seminars to include stakeholders, and community awareness campaigns to promote a sense of accountability for the preservation of marine resources. These focused strategies have ensured that the EU's efforts tackle issues in marine conservation at the grassroots and policy levels.

Through its capacity-building programs and ecosystem restoration projects, the Korean government has supported Ghana's marine conservation efforts. In order to improve biodiversity conservation and the standard of living for coastal residents, current initiatives include mangrove restoration projects (Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), 2023). The Korean government has supported community-based conservation initiatives, arranged educational seminars to increase awareness, and provided funding for scientific

study to expand our understanding of marine ecosystems. They have used scientific studies, digital knowledge-sharing platforms, and visually appealing content like video documentaries to successfully reach a variety of audiences. In addition to improving information sharing, these resources have motivated nearby communities to take an active role in conservation initiatives.

Similarly, through its collaboration with the FAO under the EAF-Nansen Program, the Norwegian government has played a significant role in advancing ecosystem-based management and sustainable fishing in Ghana. Integrating scientific research into fisheries management and marine conservation initiatives has been the main goal of this program (FAO, 2023). Developing governance frameworks for Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), conducting research expeditions to evaluate marine ecosystems, and educating stakeholders on ecosystem-based approaches are among the implemented initiatives of this program. The Norwegian Government has supported the use of mobile applications for data gathering and monitoring, public exhibits to increase awareness, and scientific studies to provide data-driven insights to support these activities. This support is targeted at government sector fisheries officials and focusses less on community stakeholders. Nevertheless, these resources and initiatives have improved the ability of fisheries managers to engage marine stakeholders in the management of maritime resources.

These joint initiatives by the Norwegian, Korean, and EU governments highlight the value of global cooperation in tackling issues related to marine conservation. These partners have improved governance, raised awareness, and encouraged sustainable behaviours in Ghana's coastal and marine environments by utilizing a variety of tactics, instruments, and platforms.

### **2.1.3. Scope of Awareness Raising Programmes of NGOs and fisher folk associations**

Local NGOs like Hen Mpoano (HM) and Friends of the Nation (FoN) have used participatory methods to raise awareness about fisheries issues and marine conservation. They emphasize the socio-economic and ecological benefits of conservation and promote community stewardship. The Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF), Central and Western Fish Improvement Association, and Development Action Association also contribute to fisheries education. They also support grassroots campaigns on Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), IUU fishing, and sustainable methods.

In Ghana, fisher associations are essential in raising constituents' awareness of and promoting behavioural change on important topics like MPAs, sustainable fishing methods, and the fight against IUU fishing. The Canoe and Fishing Gear Owners Association of Ghana (CaFGOAG), the Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council (GNCFC), the Ghana Industrial Trawlers Association (GITA), the Ghana Inshore Fishers Association (GIFA), and the National Fish Processors and Traders Association (NAFPTA) are notable associations. Through workshops, training programs, and interactions organized at the community level, these associations provide a conduit for information from donors, government agencies, and NGOs to fishers, processors, and other stakeholders (USAID-GFRA, 2023).

Through open dialogue and peer-to-peer learning, platforms such as the USAID-GFRA's Fisher-to-Fisher Dialogue have enabled fishermen to take charge of conservation education initiatives. Fishermen can discuss issues and solutions pertaining to IUU fishing, stock depletion, and MPA implementation in a safe and transparent setting during these talks. These discussions encourage peer learning and provide fishermen the opportunity to express their concerns and exchange best practices, in contrast to top-down awareness programs. This platform increases community ownership of sustainable fishing methods and fosters a sense of shared responsibility by promoting horizontal knowledge exchange (USAID-GFRA, 2024). An example to scale up grassroots engagements on marine conservation and sustainable fisheries management is the ongoing grant program collaboration between USAID-GFRA and the GNCFC.

Similarly, to effectively convey conservation messages in local languages, HM, FoN, and EJF have employed creative tools like posters, infographics (e.g. see Figure 2), jingles, community theatre, and radio drama series (HM, 2022; EJF, 2023).





Figure 2: Awareness campaign poster providing essential ecological significance of MPAs



#### 2.1.4. Scope of Awareness Raising Programmes of Academic and Research Institutions

Academic and research institutions with a coastal and marine focus have been instrumental in raising marine awareness by offering short courses on sustainable practices to fishermen and policymakers. The Lighthouse Foundation and the University of Central Florida (UCF) have partnered to integrate marine conservation themes into school curricula, aiming to increase capacity for sustainable maritime management (Lighthouse Foundation, 2022). Initiatives include creating curriculum modules for high school students, hosting workshops, and launching media campaigns targeted at community stakeholders. These efforts have improved cooperation between local fishermen and University of Cape Coast (UCC) researchers, and fostered a common understanding of ecological concerns. Specialized postsecondary programs focus on fisheries and coastal management.

#### 2.1.5. Scope of Awareness Raising Programmes of the Private Sector

In Ghana, the business sector is essential to increasing public understanding of sustainable fishing methods and marine conservation. Fishing communities have been educated about safety procedures around oil rigs by oil corporations operating in Ghana's offshore regions, especially the Western Region. While maintaining environmental safety, these initiatives seek to lessen disputes between offshore oil facilities and fishermen. To educate fishermen about safety zones near offshore rigs and the environmental concerns connected with fishing in restricted areas, companies such as Tullow Oil Ltd. have collaborated with government authorities to arrange community sensitization seminars (MoFAD, 2023). To address issues and promote knowledge, the seminars frequently incorporate debate sessions, safety demonstrations, and visual presentations. Other private sector participants in the fisheries value chain have also aided in attempts to raise awareness, in addition to oil firms and particular conservation initiatives. To teach fishermen sustainable methods that maintain fish quality, for instance, cold storage businesses have teamed up with NGO's (HM, 2022). Additionally, businesses like PZ Cussons have supported community-based projects including clean-up drives and environmental education campaigns through corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs.

Table 1 summarizes key campaigns and methodologies employed by institutions to engage stakeholders across Ghana.

**Table 1: Summary of MPA awareness campaigns in Ghana**

Overview of Awareness Campaigns and Events			
Organization	Method Used	Campaign Objective	Target Audience
<b>Government Agencies</b>	Durbars, open forums, workshops, press release/conference, television, short films, social media post, radio spots, television spots, clean up and tree planting, fact sheets, reports.	Environmental preservation, wildlife conservation, sustainable fisheries management, closed season fishing.	Fishing community, fishermen, traditional authorities, development partners, academia, NGO, media.
<b>Development Partners</b>	Music/Video campaigns, radio programs/spots, community workshops, newsletters, large format sign posts, press release.	Nested fishers and governance, marine conservation, sustainable fishing (e.g. IUU initiatives), and natural resource management, coastal pollution; closed season fishing.	Fishing community, media, academia, government agencies, NGO's, traditional authority, media.
<b>Non-Governmental Organization</b>	Workshops, workshop materials, fact sheets, reports, newsletters, training programs, open dialogue, peer-to-peer, radio drama series, radio spots, music programs, short films, television, community theatre, large format posters, flyers, infographics, branded t-shirts.	IUU fishing, sustainable fishing, depletion of fishes.	Government agencies, fishermen, fishing community, children, traditional authority, fish processors, media, academic and research institutions.

<b>Academic and Research Institutions</b>	School curricula, training workshops modules and materials, posters, flyers, fact sheets, media campaigns, reports.	Sustainable fisheries and coastal management.	Schools and students, government agencies, fishing communities, fishermen, media, NGO, local community groups, Youth/Children, CSOs.
<b>Private Sector</b>	Seminars and presentations, education campaigns, debate sessions, infographics.	Marine conservation and environmental.	Fishing community, media, NGOs, government agencies.

## 2.2. Gaps in Previous MPA Awareness Raising Programme

Campaigns for MPA awareness raising have frequently not achieved the desired long-lasting behavioural change required for MPA implementation to be successful. In addition, a programs' ability to continue is often hampered by donor dependency. The lack of integration of current education initiatives into a national framework on marine awareness raising and the underserving of many coastal communities' result in disparities in messaging and geographic reach. Additionally, conservation efforts underutilize the agency of traditional authorities, who are frequently important influencers in these areas (MoFAD, 2023). There is underutilization of digital platforms to reach younger rural audiences due to access to smart phone technology and internet connectivity, the lack of long-term strategies and metrics to gauge behavioural change, and the lack of financing to expand educational outreach outside of pilot towns (Lighthouse Foundation, 2022). For instance, there is scope to leverage social media platforms such as Facebook, X and Instagram to reach the youth in both rural and urban areas with marine conservation messages. Nonetheless, community radios are more widespread and accessible to both young people and adults. Furthermore, private sector involvement in raising awareness of marine conservation is still irregular and frequently restricted to one-off events. More successful and long-lasting awareness campaigns may result from improved cooperation between NGOs, government organizations, and private businesses (USAID-GFRA, 2023).

Scaling up marine conservation activities is made possible by the private sector's involvement, especially when those efforts are in line with long-term environmental and community objectives. At the grassroots level, fishers find it difficult to maintain awareness efforts and reach underprivileged fishing communities due to a lack of steady funding.

Additionally, the effectiveness of encounters may be hampered by practical limitations, such as the unavailability of communication equipment. Fishermen occasionally oppose conservation initiatives as well, especially when they believe that they would jeopardize their livelihoods. Stronger stakeholder relationships, ongoing capacity building, and the inclusion of traditional leaders to increase awareness campaign acceptability are all necessary to overcome these obstacles. Furthermore, scalability and regularity of awareness efforts are hampered by lack of finance and logistical limitations. Impediments to wider adoption include the lack of digital engagement tactics and opposition to conservation efforts from certain fishers. A summary of the gaps outlined below is provided in [Figure 3](#).

- Institutional Gaps

There is ineffective coordination amongst significant marine conservation groups. Government agencies like MoFAD and the Fisheries Commission operate in silos, which can make it difficult to collaborate with NGOs and private sector partners (MoFAD, 2023). Institutional competency is further hampered by a lack of interagency communication channels, limited funding, and a lack of technical expertise. These challenges make awareness-raising strategies fragmented and less successful (HM, 2022). Additionally, there is a lack of coordination between programs to increase public knowledge of MPA and academic institutions. Universities and research institutions such as the University of Cape Coast's Centre for Coastal Management are not provided enough support in community-focused programs, despite their expertise in evidence-based approaches (USAID-GFRA, 2023).

- Traditional Authority

Traditional leaders, such chiefs and queen mothers, are important in community decision-making, yet they are commonly overlooked in MPA awareness initiatives (HM, 2022). They have little role in developing and carrying out awareness campaigns, while having a big influence on community norms and habits.

- Community Preparedness

Communities frequently lack the resources necessary to maintain or actively participate in MPA-related activities. Awareness efforts that focus on disseminating information frequently ignore the practical aspects of community readiness, such as assertiveness and offering fishermen alternative revenue streams or training them to adapt to new regulations (USAID-GFRA, 2023). Communities struggle to turn knowledge into meaningful action as a result of this lack of preparation, which leaves them without a sense of control over conservation initiatives. Preparation is further hampered by a lack of understanding about how MPAs directly enhance local life. Many fishermen see conservation efforts as threats to their livelihood rather than opportunities for long-term sustainability, primarily because there is a dearth of community-led dialogue (MoFAD, 2023).

- Sustainability of Programs and Awareness Strategies

Many awareness campaigns are donor-dependent and have limited sustainability when project financing expires (HM, 2022). A loop of starting projects over with every new funding opportunity is created by this dependence on external resources, which results in irregular efforts with little continuity. Moreover, the absence of strong frameworks for monitoring and evaluation makes it difficult to quantify long-term success or improve plans (USAID-GFRA, 2023). This problem is made worse by the lack of self-sustaining, community-led approaches.

- Fragmented efforts

There are a number of organizations working in the space, but efforts are not coordinated, and efforts are usually targeted towards each individual donor or organisations objective'sUSAID, the WB, FAO, the Norwegian government, the EU, and the Korean government are all very much active in the space but rarely collaborate. There is a Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) platform that has been created to serve as an avenue for the CSOs in the fisheries space to coordinate efforts; however, there has been limited outputs from this at the time of writing. The overreliance on short-term funding also hinders the scalability and sustainability of existing initiatives. A very important issue to also note is the message fatigue that is created by un-coordinated efforts.



**Figure 3: Key challenges of awareness raising campaigns in Ghana.**

## 2.3. Effectiveness of Previous Awareness Raising Programmes

Posters, jingles, animations, community outreach, and engagements have been used in the majority of the awareness-raising initiatives. Local languages like Ga, Ewe, Fante, Ga, and Nzema are frequently translated into the posters and animations. Dangme and Ahanta are occasionally included. Adult fishermen have been the focus of a large number of campaigns and awareness-raising activities. Nearly the same groups and individuals are regularly active, ignoring other crucial demographics, particularly women and young people, according to a review of participant forms from GFRA (USAID-GFRA, 2023) and HM (HM, 2022). The hiring of the same individuals for participant mobilization may be contributing to limited participation, as it may not accurately represent the broader community's fisheries constituents. The process of selecting participants for these engagements, conducted through fisher associations such as the GNCFC, NAFPTA, and CaFCOAG, creates a scenario in which fishers not affiliated with these associations are marginalized. Furthermore, the majority of the engagements have occurred on a scale reminiscent of a “*crusade*,” rather than within smaller and core groups, which offers a chance for more tailored and candid discussions. Radio and community outreach continue to serve as the primary avenues for communication.

Despite the aforementioned deficiencies in previous marine awareness raising campaigns, it is essential to underscore several effective practices and promising methodologies that merit attention:

- **Innovative Outreach Strategies:** The creative engagement methods employed by USAID-GFRA, including murals, flash mob performances, and folklore storytelling, have shown promise in attracting attention and rendering intricate messages more accessible.
- **Capacity-Building Initiatives:** The training provided by USAID-GFRA for personnel from the Ministry and Fisheries Commission has fortified the groundwork for enhanced outreach and engagement. This investment in capacity presents opportunities for further development.
- **Collaborative Learning:** Participating in peer-to-peer exchanges is an engaging way to share information, particularly when combined with local stories. The effective techniques described here provide a strong foundation for creating an outreach plan that is more engaging, inclusive, and long-lasting. By means of ongoing development and growth, they have the potential to foster real behavioural change among fishermen and their communities.



### 3. Review of Marine Information, Education and Communication (IEC) Resources

Marine Information, Education and Communication (IEC) resources in Ghana are packaged in various formats for audiences across coastal communities, the academic community, and actors in the private sector. Development of such resources are often project objective driven and mostly spearheaded by academic institutions, NGOs and development partners as part of outreach and community engagement initiatives.

#### 3.1. School curriculum-based marine educational resources

Education is essential to raising awareness and comprehension of marine conservation in Ghana, where information on marine and coastal resources is incorporated into the national curriculum at all educational levels. At the elementary and secondary education levels, marine educational resources are integrated into extracurricular activities. Biodiversity and climate change are mentioned in passing in mainstream environmental studies courses, but there is frequently little information about marine ecosystems, fisheries management, and the significance of marine protected areas (MPAs) (MoFAD, 2023). For example, although general ecological lessons are taught to pupils, important topics such as mangroves, coral reefs, and the socio-economic significance of sustainable fishing are rarely covered in school curricula. Many pupils in coastal areas lack a thorough understanding of how marine resources affect their lives and communities as a result of this gap in fundamental education.

Specialized programs targeting marine and coastal conservation are more advanced at the tertiary level, although they are still restricted to a small number of institutions. For instance, the UCC provides degrees in coastal management and fisheries that offer comprehensive instruction in sustainable fishing methods and the conservation of marine resources. The goal of these programs is to give graduates the technical know-how required to tackle issues in Ghana's marine environments. However, the lack of comparable courses at other colleges around the nation and the limited enrolment capacity limit access to these programs (UCC, 2023). UCC has partnered with the Ghana Fisheries Recovery Activity (GFRA) to provide customized short courses for fishermen, policymakers, and other stakeholders in addition to full-degree programs. These classes cover certain topics such as fisheries management regulations, responsible fishing methods, and the ecological significance of MPAs (USAID-GFRA, 2024). These programs seek to close the knowledge gap and encourage sustainable behaviours among stakeholders by addressing both technical and non-technical audiences. However, these courses are now only available in some areas, and in order to guarantee wider accessibility and impact, these programs must be scaled.

The Regional Maritime University's (RMU) "Go to Sea" campaign is another noteworthy effort in maritime education. Young people are encouraged by this promotion to seek jobs in the maritime sector, which includes shipping, marine resource management, and fishing. RMU encourages young people to become actively involved in Ghana's maritime resources by showcasing the economic prospects in marine-related sectors through public awareness campaigns and school outreach initiatives (Regional Maritime University, 2023). Although the campaign has increased awareness of professions in the maritime industry, there is a need for improvement as it does not specifically target the conservation aspects of marine environments.

There are no specific marine and coastal resources modules in basic or secondary schools that might be used as a starting point for students seeking tertiary-level specialized education. Additionally, despite their effectiveness, short courses and awareness programs are frequently donor-dependent and region-specific, which limits their long-term viability and scalability (HM, 2022). Courses in geography and environmental studies could cover subjects like the ecological function of coral reefs, fisheries sustainability, and mangrove restoration. At the tertiary level, capacity building might be improved by increasing access to specialized programs and fortifying partnerships between academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, and governmental organizations. Last but not least, expanding popular short-course programs like those provided by UCC and incorporating conservation-related topics into initiatives like "Go to Sea" may encourage increased public awareness and community involvement.

### 3.2. IEC resources for community engagement and outreach

CSOs and NGOs have been instrumental in promoting awareness of sustainable fishing methods and marine resource conservation. Their contributions go beyond material development and include innovative community outreach programs and multimedia campaigns that appeal to a wide range of audiences. The creation of educational resources, including infographic banners (see samples provided in Figure 4 below), posters, and community guides (see Figure 5 for outreach and educational campaigns organized in Ahanta West), that highlight the ecological and socioeconomic significance of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) has been greatly aided by Hen Mpoano. Fishermen and fish processors with different literacy levels can use these resources because they are frequently adapted to local languages and situations (HM, 2022).





From

To

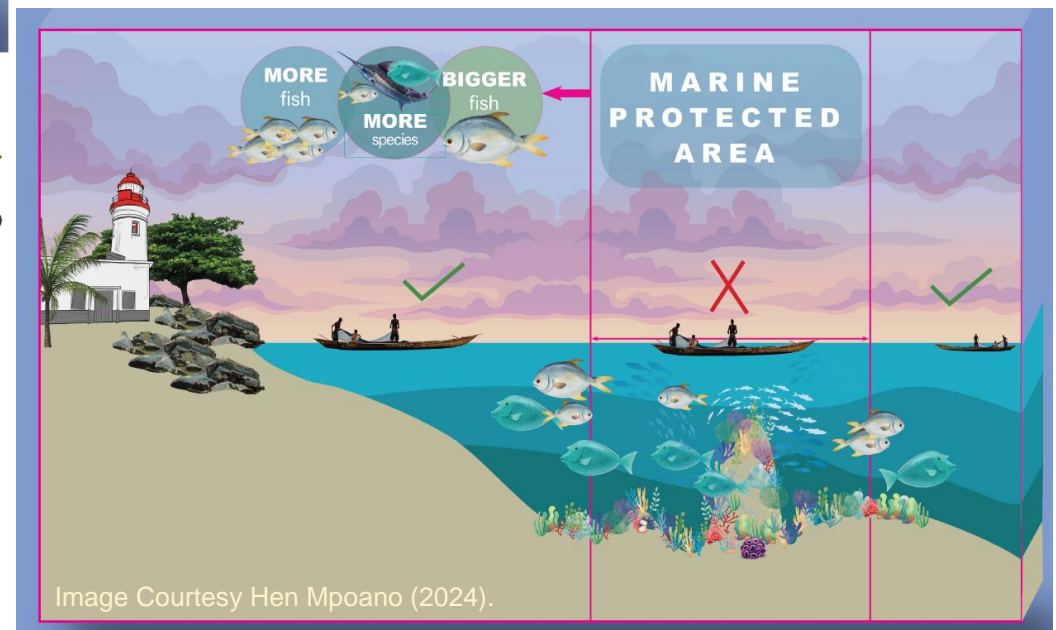


Figure 4: Educational infographic campaigns on the benefit of MPA's establishment.



Figure 5: Ensuring meaningful marine resource campaigns through community engagement.

In order to highlight the significance of preserving fish breeding sites, HM has also utilized community theatre to illustrate the effects of illegal fishing methods like "Saiko" and dynamite fishing. These performances, which convey conservation lessons in an interesting, approachable, and audience-centred way, frequently target fishermen, fish processors, and young people living along the coast. FoN's multimedia activities, including play series and radio discussions, cover ecological functions, overfishing risks, and ethical fishing methods. These engagements promote inclusivity and conversation, often featuring live call-ins for community members.

In order to address IUU fishing and its effects on local livelihoods and food security, EJF has also made considerable use of radio. In order to reach a wider audience, including people who might not frequently attend community meetings, EJF frequently uses jingles in its campaigns that condense difficult conservation themes into memorable, catchy words (EJF, 2023). In addition to radio, these groups have arranged community drama series and film screenings in coastal villages and towns. For instance, short films showing the long-term advantages of MPAs, such as boosted fish stocks and better lifestyles, have been shown by EJF and HM.

These gatherings are frequently followed by assisted conversations in which attendees can consider the messages and express their opinions. These screenings focus on youth organizations, local leaders, and fishermen, fostering communication and knowledge exchange. There are still difficulties in spite of these admirable efforts. For instance, the consistency and coverage of engagements throughout all coastal regions are impacted by the restricted funding that frequently limits the reach of these efforts.

Furthermore, even if community dramas and radio shows are very successful, they need to be redesigned, and followed up frequently to guarantee long-lasting behavioural change. As has been illustrated, increasing collaborations between local government, NGOs, and CSOs may aid in the expansion of these programs and guarantee their long-term viability.

Table 2 below summarizes IEC resources and tools that have been utilized to reach target groups and audiences within Ghana's marine and coastal sector. For each IEC material, the corresponding engagement channel and the scale for their deployment are illustrated. Furthermore, the target audience and more specifically, disseminating institutions are identified.

**Table 2: Key IEC materials and resources frequently deployed in Ghana**

IEC Tools and Resources for Outreach				
IEC Materials	Engagement Channels	Priority Level	Target audience	Convener
Technical materials.	Reports, newsletters factsheets, training materials, training curriculum.	National, local communities.	Local and international NGOs, government agencies, educational institutions.	IUCN, Conservation International, MoFAD, EPA, WD, HM, FoN.
Public relations materials.	Press conferences, press releases, short films, infographics, radio spots.	National, local communities.	Media, fisher folk associations, CSO.	Traditional authorities, NAFPTA, GNCFC, NAFAG.
Social and behaviour change communication materials.	Music videos, television spots, local radio, poster, flyers, workshop materials.	National, regional, and local communities.	Government agencies, fisher folk associations, private sector.	MoFAD, MESTI/EPA, NAFPTA, GNCFC, NAFAG, Fish processors, Fish mongers.
Course materials and modules.	Workshop materials, training materials.	National, local communities.	Educational institutions, government agencies.	HM, FoN, EIJ, Centre for Coastal Management (CCM).



## 4. Recommendations

- Revitalize Public Outreach Strategies

To improve the effectiveness of conservation initiatives, outreach strategies should be updated to reflect current possibilities and obstacles. Emphasizing the benefits of implementing conservation strategies, rather than just regulations, is crucial. Transitioning from "do/don't do" messaging to highlighting concrete benefits, such as enhanced fish populations and economic resilience, is essential. Broadening the target audience to include a broader spectrum of fishers and youth, including government agencies, CSOs, and NGO's, can foster a more representative and inclusive methodology.

- Redesign Engagement Strategies for Inclusivity and Agency

Conventional engagement techniques frequently fall short in empowering marginalized groups including women, young people, and indigenous tribes to take charge of conservation projects or guaranteeing inclusivity. Redesigning engagement tactics cultivating reciprocal dialogue that elevate engagement sessions to dialogues by integrating participatory techniques such as workshops, role-playing, and community brainstorming activities, expand innovative strategies and fostering engagement through peer leaderships, innovative strategies, and to leverage effective projects such as murals and flash community ambassadors who engage in meaningful dialogues and disseminate knowledge in accessible manners, could encourage sustainability.

- Incorporate marine education and outreach into school curriculum

Experiential learning approaches including field trips to beaches, aquariums, and marine research centres and hands-on activities like water testing, beach clean-ups, and monitoring are useful components of extra curriculum activities on marine education. Opportunities could also be explored for integrating marine education in high school science and social studies subjects and that of undergraduate courses in the marine sciences. Diversify Communication Channels and Integrate Mass Media.

The impact of awareness campaigns may be limited by the fact that not all stakeholder groups will respond well to traditional communication channels. Diversifying communication channels and using mass media to reinforce important messages are crucial for ensuring that conservation initiatives are widely understood and supported. Employing narrative-driven programs to engage wider audiences, particularly those unable to participate in in-person gatherings, and or leveraging Digital Platforms through community-oriented WhatsApp groups, or initiative social media campaigns (e.g., via TikTok), to actively involve younger fishers could yield additional impacts.

- Tailor Strategies to Specific Audiences

For a variety of audiences, a one-size-fits-all strategy frequently falls short of producing the intended effect. Thus, it is recommended to formulate tailored strategies for distinct cohorts (e.g., younger fishers, women processors, policymakers) to guarantee pertinence and efficacy. For positive reinforcement, future initiatives should emphasize and acknowledge commendable practices through public awards schemes such as the responsible fishing awards scheme introduced by GFRA. There's the need to vary themes and formats to maintain the content's vitality and appeal, employing innovative strategies such as storytelling contests or seasonal initiatives.

- National Marine Awareness Raising Framework

A national framework for education and awareness-raising on marine protected areas (MPAs) is needed to ensure coherence and coordinated efforts. This framework should align with Ghana's National MPA Implementation Strategy, bridging the gap between community engagement, policy implementation, and awareness-raising. By integrating government, NGOs, CSOs, fishing groups, and commercial sector organizations, the framework ensures long-term sustainability, maximizes resources, harmonizes messaging, and encourages acceptability. This policy would institutionalize marine conservation education for sustainable lifestyles (USAID-GFRA, 2023; MoFAD, 2023).

## 5. Conclusions

Ghana is actively promoting marine education and raising public awareness of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) through various strategies. Fisher associations like the Ghana National Canoe Fishermen Council and National Fish Processors and Traders Association are leading grassroots campaigns on MPAs, IUU fishing, and sustainable fishing methods. Community-based engagements, open dialogue, and creative tools like posters, infographics, jingles, community theatre, and radio drama series (HM, 2022; EJJ, 2023) have been used to convey conservation messages. Educational programs, such as customized short courses on sustainable practices at the University of the Central Coast (UCC) and specialized postsecondary programs at the Regional Marine University, have also been implemented. Donor-funded initiatives like the WB's WARF project have also raised awareness of important topics, such as MPAs, closed seasons, and alternative livelihoods (World Bank, 2020).

Despite these attempts, there are still gaps. Community-level awareness campaigns often fail to result in sustained behavioural change, and donor reliance limits the sustainability of initiatives. Disparities in message and geographic reach arise from the underserving of many coastal areas and the lack of integration of existing education projects into a national framework. Furthermore, traditional authority, who are often significant influences in these communities, is underutilized in conservation efforts (MoFAD, 2023).

The research suggests two key steps to address marine conservation issues in Ghana. Firstly, it suggests shifting from awareness-raising activities to evidence-based behaviour-change initiatives, incorporating culturally appropriate, community-driven interventions using digital platforms, peer mentorship, and social incentives. Secondly, incorporating marine and coastal conservation issues into Ghana's national education curriculum at all levels is crucial. A national framework for teaching and increasing public understanding of Marine Protected Areas (MPA) is needed, aligned with Ghana's National MPA Implementation Strategy. This framework would coordinate activities of the government, NGOs, CSOs, fisher organizations, donor agencies, research institutions, and commercial sector entities to ensure long-term sustainability, maximize resources, and unify the message. This policy would institutionalize marine conservation education to protect Ghana's marine habitats and encourage sustainable lifestyles. (USAID-GFRA, 2023; MoFAD, 2023).

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## Ocean Country Partnership Programme

The Ocean Country Partnership Programme (OCP) is a UK Government-led programme delivered under the Blue Planet Fund in Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) eligible countries. Through this programme, Cefas, JNCC and MMO will provide technical assistance to support countries to tackle marine pollution, support sustainable seafood practices and establish designated, well-managed and enforced MPAs.



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