Recognizing and Amplifying the Value of Women Shellfish Harvester’s Work Through Rights-based Fisheries Co-Management

TRY OYSTER WOMEN’S ASSOCIATION
The Gambia and Beyond

Fatou Janha, TRY Oyster Women’s Association
Karen Kent, University of Rhode Island, Coastal Resources Center
The Gambia
Ecosystem-based Co-Management

The Government of The Gambia granted TRY exclusive use rights to the cockle and oyster fishery in the Tanbi Wetlands National Park

The first case for a women’s group in Sub-Saharan Africa
Cockle and Oyster Co-Management Plan

Management Objectives:
- Biological
- Ecological
- Social
- Economic

Key Management Measures:
- Closed season 8 months
- Size restriction (bigger than 6cm)
- Specified gear (axe)

Management plans become living documents with frequent review and amendments to adjust to changing fishery and environmental conditions.
Key Outcomes and Impact

Sustained Implementation Over 7 Years with Minimal Support

• Annual closed seasons 8 months per year
• Use of less destructive gear and harvesting techniques
• Monitoring of illegal activities and engaging government authorities to pursue enforcement
• Term limits for TRY officers at community and national level

Co-management provided consistent ecosystem governance even during political crisis when natural resources are highly vulnerable to over-exploitation because it depends more on the women resource users themselves than on government institutions
Key Outcomes and Impact

Replication of Women Shellfisheries Co-Management in Ghana

The Government of Ghana granted DOPA exclusive use rights to the oyster fishery in the Densu Delta. The 2nd case for a women’s group in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Key Management Measures:
- Closed season 5 months
- Size restriction (7cm or bigger)
Key Outcomes and Impact

Building social, economic, and natural capital for the oyster harvesters and their wider communities

650 women members of TRY and DOPA in The Gambia and Ghana benefitted from trainings and participatory action research on:

- Leadership
- Organizational development
- Co-management
- Oyster biology
- Shellfish aquaculture
- Mangrove replanting
- Improved hygiene and handling
- Processing, branding and marketing
- Literacy
- Microfinance

Building social, economic, and natural capital for the oyster harvesters and their wider communities
Key Outcomes and Impact

Building social, economic, and natural capital for the oyster harvesters and their wider communities

Solidarity
Self-Confidence
Decision-making authority
Key Outcomes and Impact

Building social, economic, and natural capital for the oyster harvesters and their wider communities

Improved hygiene & handling, marketing & branding = increased price per kilogram
Key Outcomes and Impact

Building social, economic, and natural capital for the oyster harvesters and their wider communities

TRY youth benefiting from training in oyster biology & water quality

Youth involvement in co-management
Key Outcomes and Impact

Building social, economic, and natural capital for the oyster harvesters and their wider communities

TRY + DOPA = 50 ha mangroves planted in The Gambia & Ghana
Key Outcomes and Impact

Tools for Scaling up good practices regionally with strong community-ownership

WOMEN SHELLFISHERS AND FOOD SECURITY PROJECT
Strategies that empowered marginalized women shellfishers & amplified the value of their work

Engagement of youth from oyster harvesting communities to reinforce women’s work and fill gaps in government capacity

The “New TRY Generation”
Collection of water quality and harvest data needed for informed decision-making on oyster management & to document the economic, environmental, and social value of the oyster fishery and the work of women harvesters
Strategies that empowered marginalized women shellfishers & amplified the value of their work

Peer learning and technical assistance for local capacity building
Strategies that empowered marginalized women shellfishers & amplified the value of their work

Scaling up Gambia best practices in community-based co-management to Ghana
Strategies that empowered marginalized women shellfishers & amplified the value of their work

Participatory management of integrated programs combining local and scientific knowledge

Fisheries Livelihood
- Mangrove protection & restoration
- Aquaculture
- Sustainable Wild harvest
- Value added (hygiene, branding, smoking, vacuum packing, pickling, raw)

Safe working conditions

Basic Needs
- Health
- Literacy

Alternative Livelihoods
- Daughter’s skills training
- Soap-making, rice cultivation, etc.

Microfinance
Lessons Learned

• Improving shellfisheries livelihoods through rights-based, ecosystem-based co-management is an effective entry point for empowering women through broader recognition and validation of their valuable work.

• Youth engagement within TRY can help to address an important challenge faced by the oyster harvesters, the weak capacity of fisheries departments in The Gambia and Ghana to play their co-management role, especially for data collection and reporting.
THANK YOU