

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF SMALL-SCALE FISH
PROCESSING ACTIVITIES IN A COASTAL COMMUNITY IN GHANA**

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ABSTRACT

The study was embarked on to ascertain the environmental impact of small-scale fish processing activities in the Keta-Anloga wetlands area which forms part of the environmentally fragile coastal belt of Ghana with the view to suggesting ways of ameliorating possible negative impacts. The physico-chemical and bacteriological parameters of waters used for fish processing at various sampling sites were assessed. High levels of faecal and total coliform as well as *Vibrio spp.* were recorded in the water samples. This suggested that shallow wells in which they draw water for their processing activities were contaminated. Nutrient levels in the water were also high. The salinity levels were also high suggesting salt-water intrusion into the wells. Besides a field survey involving the administration of structured questionnaires, focus group discussions, a lot of personal observation and in-depth interviews with stakeholders was carried out to collate the perceptions of the locals on the research question under review. The socio-economic study confirms that fish smoking is the most widely used method in the area, and was also perceived as the most environmentally unfriendly method of fish processing. There is ample evidence that mangroves, which are mainly used for fish smoking, are being over harvested leading to depletion of the resource. The fish smoking activities have impacted negatively on fish processors in the form of diseases such as eye problems, hypertension due to stress and other respiratory problems. The attitude of the processors in term of waste disposal from the fish processing is not positive. This has led to filthy surroundings especially around fish processing units. The level of awareness of the inhabitants (fishers and non fishers with regards to the negative impacts of fish processing) however is encouraging hence they could be regarded as environmentally conscious. Women who were the main actors in the fish processing industry were not actively involved in taking decisions that affect directly their trade. Cost effective environmental remediation measures within the scope of the Integrated Coastal Zone

Management Plan these include afforestation programmes, enforcement measures such as the application of by-laws, and provision of environmental education to the inhabitants using the bottom up approach.

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