

Revisiting Indigenous Knowledge for Equitable Marine Conservation in Africa

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CREATING SYNERGIES BETWEEN
INDIGENOUS PRACTICES AND
SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE

(ISIPSK)



SANKOFA

Implemented by:



University of
St Andrews

in collaboration with



FCWC

Fisheries Committee for
the West Central Gulf of Guinea

Funded by:

**The PEW Fellows Program
in Marine Conservation
at PEW Charitable Trust**

Outline



Relevance of Africa's
marine resources



Review of
Indigenous
Knowledge



Spotlight ISIPSK



Recommendations



Acknowledgement
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Relevance of Africa's Marine Resources

More than 200 million Africans rely on marine resources (Okafor-Yarwood & Onuoha, 2023)

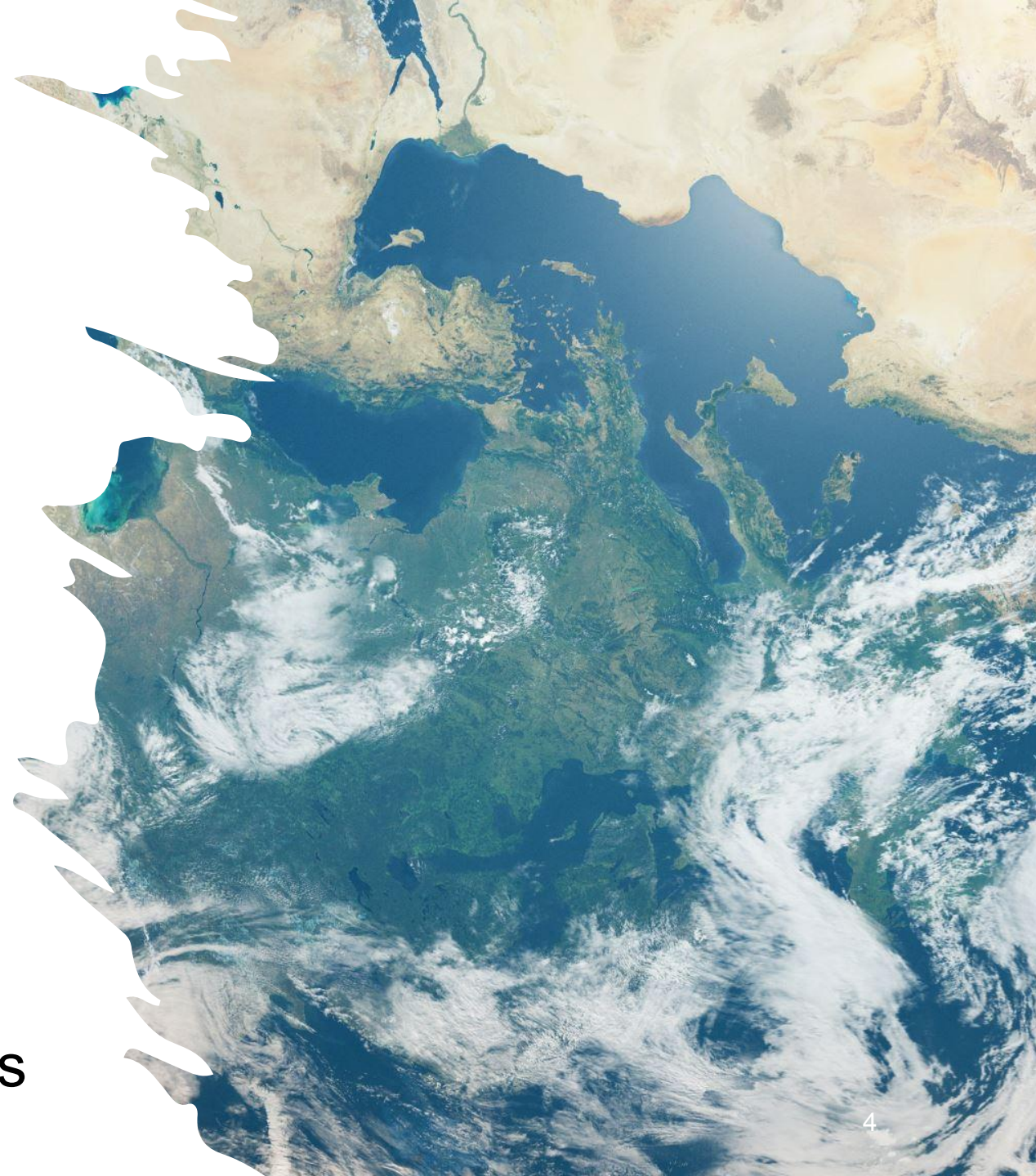
Between US\$ 1.3 to 9.4 billion is lost to IUU fishing (Jeffang, 2023; Failler, 2020)

Depletion of marine resources linked to increased crime and emigration in coastal communities (DCAF, 2023; Okafor-Yarwood, 2022)



Towards Equitable Conservation

- Blue Economy, SDGs, AfCFTA support sustainability of marine resources
- Gap in the sustenance of conservation interventions (IUCN, 2020).
- Equitable conservation considers economic, ecological and socio-cultural pillars (UN, 2012).
- Scientists are recognising indigenous people and their local ecological



Review of Indigenous Knowledge (IK)

- IK is the accumulated, specialised knowledge and practices about local ecosystems, generationally transferred among a group of people (Jabali et al., 2020; Berkes 1985)
- Growing global focus to synergise IK with scientific knowledge (SK) and harness its advantages (Ridwan et al., 2023; Ullah et al., 2023)



Potential benefits of revisiting IK

- Offer nuanced insights into issues from local perspective
- Help to align management with local practices for greater buy in and compliance as practices become more familiar
- Creates avenue for increased collaboration between resource users and managers
- Offer a more cost-effective, effective and inclusive approach for local resource management

(Jabali, 2020; Cinner & Aswani, 2007; Ridwan et al., 2023)

Applications of IK

Kenya - weather forecasting & resource management



Congo & Cameroon – fish stock assessment



Ghana, Kenya – gear innovation



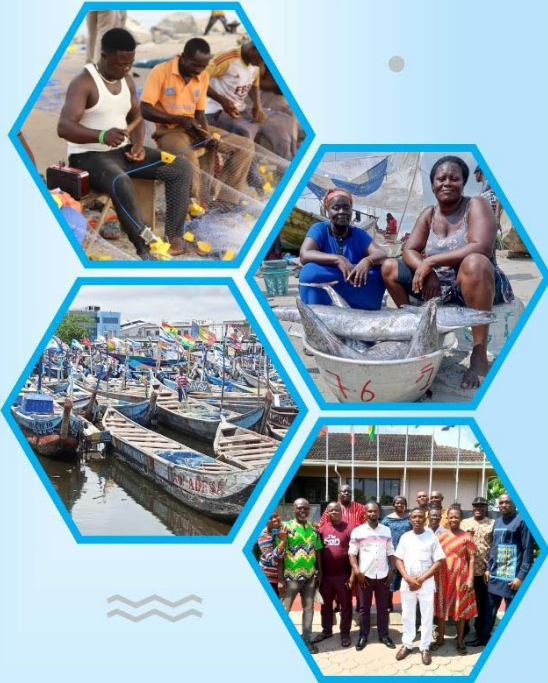
- Some cultural practices, rituals and taboos contribute to species conservation (Ndubisi, 2021)
- IK applications in health, forestry and agriculture sectors.
- African IK seldom considered in formal management (Amo-Agyemang, 2021)

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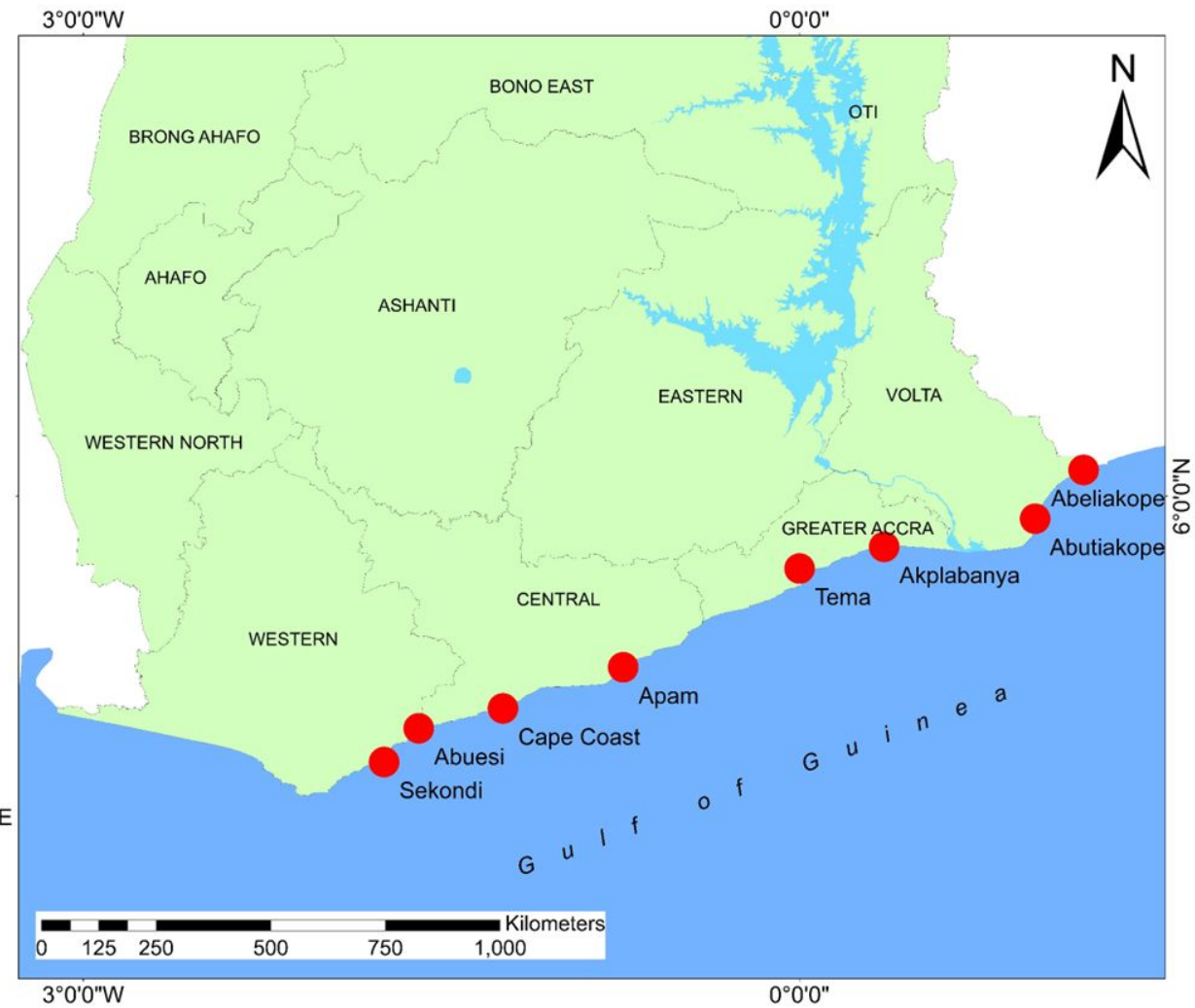
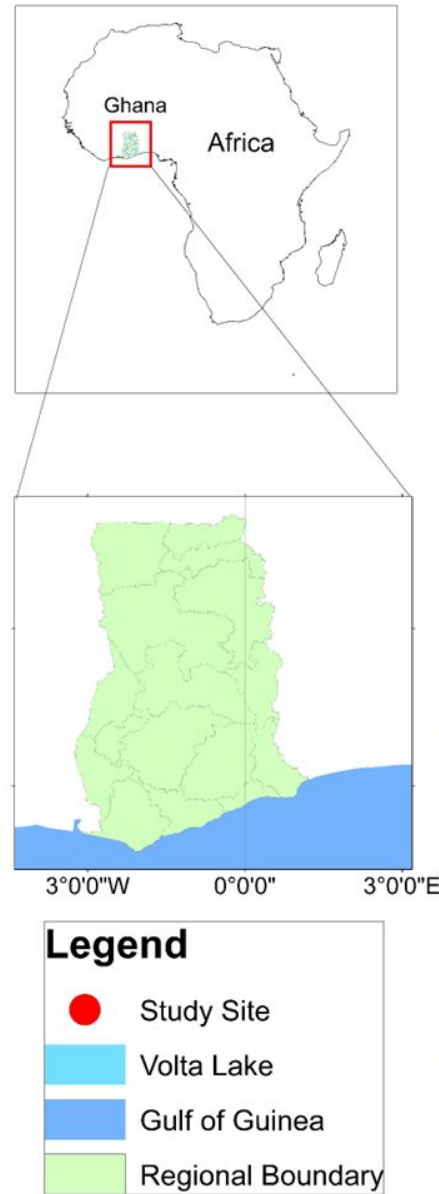
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Spotlighting Fisherfolk Knowledge through ISIPSK

Threefold Research objectives

1. To harmonise historical marine conservation practices that can be integrated with current scientific conservation practices.
 2. To advance knowledge on the gendered socio-economic impact of implementing a closed fishing season in Ghana as a case study country.
 3. To develop innovative ways of disseminating information to develop an effective sub-regional fisheries conservation and sustainable livelihood plan.
- Adopts a **collaborative** and **inclusive** research approach to leverage wider impact

Selected Study Sites





ISIPSK Research methods

Engagements with over 800 fisherfolk in eight major fishing communities in the four coastal regions of Ghana to understand their perspectives.

Anecdotal Insights from ISIPSK fieldwork

- Rich knowledge of their natural environments and systems
- Traditional practices for regulating marine resources
- Spiritual connection and care for the marine resources
- Reduced economic yields from marine resources facilitate unsustainable fishing practices and social vices in coastal communities e.g. theft.



Recommendations

- Agenda 21 and the 2007 UN Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples advocate for the participation of indigenous populations and incorporation of traditional knowledge into decision making.
- Regulatory agencies should harness the knowledge of community folk for **local management of resources**
- Fisherfolk experiential knowledge of the oceans, sea conditions and indigenous navigation techniques could complement **safety at sea and maritime security efforts** of Government security agencies
- Insights from historically applied IK should be revisited and harnessed for **sustainable, equitable and inclusive marine conservation** in Africa.

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Fisherfolk leadership



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THANK YOU



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