Introduction to Ghana

- The first nation in Sub-Saharan Africa to achieve independence from European colonial power, Ghana, formerly the Gold Coast, became independent from Great Britain in 1957 (CIA, 2016).
- GDP is $42.7 billion, up 32% increase from 2010. From 2000 to 2016, Ghana’s per capita GDP increased from a $263.1 to $1,513.5 USD (current USD: World Bank, 2016).
- The surge in Ghana’s GDP can be explained by remarkable growth in the service and industrial sectors, which represented, respectively, 56.6% and 24.3% of the total GDP in 2016 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2017: 5).
- Natural resource profile includes gold, diamond, bauxite, manganese, aluminium, oil, cocoa, and timber. Gold is presently Ghana’s leading export (42%) of total, followed by cocoa beans (18%) and crude petroleum (9.1%) (2016 data; AJO Simeus et al, 2011).
- Persisting issues include insufficient public funds, inadequate infrastructure, and a fluctuating international oil market (Moliri et al, 2015).

Background on Ghana’s Fishery

- Fishing industry contributes between 1 and 4.5 percent of Ghana’s total GDP, but its contribution is declining (FAO, 2016 and Ghana Statistical Service, 2016).
- The fishery sector employs 10 percent of the entire Ghanaian labor force (FAO, 2016).
- The vast majority are employed in the small-scale, artisanal fisheries sub-sector, which consequently provides over 70 percent of total fish catch, and employs over 60 percent of women engaged in the industry (Ibid).
- Fish comprise 50-63 percent of the total intake of animal protein in Ghana, representing the highest proportion in Africa (FAO, 2016; Asan, 2000 in Béné et al 2005).

- Fish provides vital micronutrients, like iron, zinc, calcium, vitamin A, and others, that cannot be furnished by staples, like maize and cassava (Béné et al 2005).
- Fish production has decreased from 377.6 in 2000, to 203 in 2014, though consumption has remained steady, at around 586, and Ghana’s population has increased (thousand tons: World Bank, 2016; FAO, 2016; FAO, 2016b).

- Sharks and the Fin Trade
  - Sharks are caught as targeted species and as bycatch in Ghana, and provide locally-conserved animal protein, and a source of income for artisanal fishermen (meat is consumed locally and fins are exported).
  - Shark products include meat, fins, shark oil, cartilage, skin, and other parts are used in pharmaceuticals and cosmetics (FAO, 2016; Dent et al, 2015).

- Middlemen and middlemen sold said were from Guinea (41%), followed by Ghana (35%), Ghana and Guinea (12%), and China (12%). No can owner reported their buyers to be Chinese, and no middleman reported their buyer as Ghanaian.

- IPHCs
  - The majority of middlemen (80%) reported that shark fins were their main source of income. Few can owners reported that shark fins were their primary source of income (38%), citing fish as their main source of income (mostly tuna species).

- V. Technology and Seasonality
  - Distance: 150 km (average), with a range of 77.5 km to 250 km.
  - Length: 4 days (range of 2.5 to 5 days).
  - Cost: 1,250 to 2000 Ghana Cedis per trip (average of 1600 Ghana Cedis or 360 USD).
  - Fishing is year-round. Productive upwelling seasons in Ghana are December-January, February and July-September, fishermen indicated that the latter was the bumper season. Shark season is unknown.

- Distance, quality of the bait (i.e. dolphin), and the lunar cycle (bait is more visible when the moon is full) are important determinants of productive shark catches.

- Sharks are caught using hook and line technique.

- VI. History
  - Fin trade began sometime in the mid to late 1970s.
  - Early trade was not monetary, and fins were bartered for nets, lanterns, parks, lumps, soap, sugar, and rice.

- VII. Laws
  - Some can owners knew that it was illegal to catch dolphins and sea turtles.
  - Fisheries Act 2002 (Act 625): marine mammals, which include dolphins, are not allowed to be fished for Ghanaian waters, and “Any marine mammal caught incidentally shall be released immediately and returned to the waters from which it was taken with the least possible injury” (MOFAD, 2002: 37).

- Despite the law, fishermen caught dolphins anyway, and would hide them if necessary. They also cited law enforcement.

- VIII. Catch and species composition
  - Shark catches have dramatically decreased.
  - Shark catch has become less diverse over time; catches are other mainly comprised of Blue sharks.

- IX. Fishermen must travel farther distances to catch sharks.

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