Global Gateway

Funded by the European Union

WEST AFRICA SUSTAINABLE OCEAN PROGRAMME

▶ SUSTAINABLE BLUE ECONOMY

Women-led service businesses for sustainable fisheries in West Africa

PROJECT LEAD:

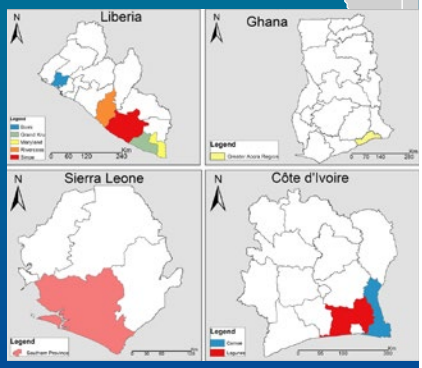
CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS:

INTERVENTION AREAS:

- **Ivory Coast** (Lagunes and Sud-Comoé regions)
- **Ghana** (Greater Accra region)
- **Liberia** (southeastern coast and Bomi)
- **Sierra Leone** (Freetown and Bonthe)





DURATION:
30 months
(September 2026 – March 2029)

TOTAL BUDGET:
€2.9 million

IMPROVING WOMEN'S INCOMES AND RESILIENCE IN THE FISHERIES SECTOR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OBJECTIVES

Strengthen women-led SMEs and cooperatives to develop economically viable fish preservation and processing services that increase incomes and reduce losses (solar-powered cold storage, energy-efficient smoking and storage).

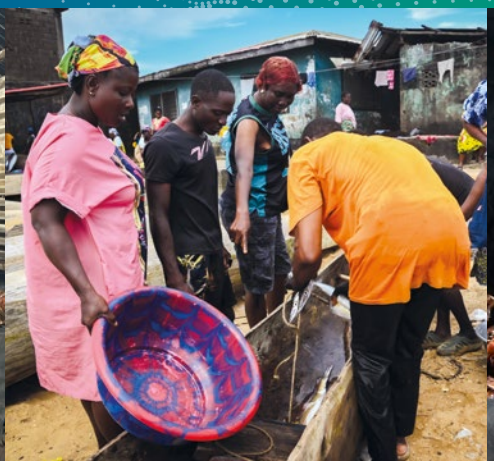
Strengthen women's economic resilience while improving their working conditions in fisheries value chains in West Africa..

CONTEXT

Within fisheries value chains, women carry out a significant share of handling, processing and marketing activities. However, they remain highly vulnerable to post-harvest losses, inadequate cold-chain infrastructure, energy-intensive smoking technologies, logistics costs, and limited access to financial and commercial support services. These constraints undermine their economic activities, livelihoods and household resilience.

PROJECT INTERVENTIONS

- Conduct comprehensive mapping, needs assessments and gender analysis of existing and potential blue economy SMEs and cooperatives, as well as women fish traders.
- Develop capacity-building programmes based on identified SME needs and provide training on blue economy principles, business and financial management, environmental and social safeguards, and business engagement, including gender-responsive arrangements.
- Establish a grant mechanism and provide in-kind grants for solar-powered cold rooms, improved energy-efficient smoking ovens and related technologies.
- Provide training on the use and management of the equipment supplied.
- Develop case studies, guides, tools and training materials, and disseminate these knowledge products through local, national and regional platforms, including communities of practice, workshops and webinars, to support replication and scaling up of the initiative.


TARGET GROUPS

- Independent women fish traders and their cooperatives.
- Women leaders and staff of women-led SMEs in the fisheries value chain.
- Public authorities, including Liberia's National Fisheries and Aquaculture Authority (NAFAA), Sierra Leone's Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources (MFMR), Ghana's Fisheries Commission and Côte d'Ivoire's Directorate-General of Fisheries and Aquaculture (DP), responsible for institutional oversight, policy harmonisation and sector legitimacy.
- National civil society partners.

FINAL BENEFICIARIES

4,500 women involved in fish processing and trading in the four implementing countries.

MAIN EXPECTED RESULTS

- 20 SMEs or cooperatives identified, supported and assessed in target countries, providing sustainable services responsive to women's specific needs.
- 80% of supported SMEs improve their operational and business capacities and incorporate sustainable, gender-responsive services.
- 300 formal jobs created or sustained.
- 4,500 women working in fish processing and trading benefit from improved services.
- An average 25% increase in net income among target groups.
- 200 stakeholders reached through dissemination, knowledge capitalisation and learning activities.
- One operational monitoring and evaluation framework ensuring project accountability, adaptability and replicability.
- Three sustainable technologies deployed, including solar-powered cold rooms, improved energy-efficient smoking ovens and related equipment.
- A 50% reduction in the use of unsustainable fish processing and preservation practices among targeted beneficiaries.

INTENDED CHANGES

- Reduced post-harvest losses; increased adoption of low-emission technologies in post-harvest fish processing; stronger capacities of local SMEs and cooperatives (including improved marketing); and development of tailored financial services.
- Greater selectivity and environmental sustainability of fishing gear; provision of economic services (ice, storage, transport and information services) at sustainable prices.
- Formalisation and professionalisation of SMEs and cooperatives; definition of revenue models (fees, pay-per-use and service contracts); and establishment of a proportionate framework for operation, maintenance, monitoring and evaluation.
- A cost–benefit analysis demonstrating the system's viability and sustainability, together with its integration into suitable financial and non-financial services.

CONTRIBUTION TO WASOP OBJECTIVES

- Greater professionalisation of artisanal fisheries actors, improved competitiveness of fisheries value chains, women's entrepreneurship and deployment of low-carbon technologies.
- Emergence of sustainable, inclusive and replicable business models across several West African coastal countries.
- Protection and restoration of coastal ecosystems through reduced wood consumption and pressure on mangroves.

The "Women-led service businesses for sustainable fisheries in West Africa" project is one of four pilot projects funded by the European Union under the WASOP Pillar 2 – Sustainable Blue Economy call for proposals, implemented by Expertise France.

These four projects aim to test and develop sustainable, inclusive, and resilient economic models in West Africa's coastal regions. They share a common goal: to make the blue economy a driver of shared prosperity, innovation, job creation, and climate resilience.

With a budget of €59 million over five years, the WASOP – West Africa Sustainable Ocean Programme - stems from the European Union's Global Gateway Strategy.

EXPERTISE FRANCE
GROUPE AFD

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