



# **Comparative Study of the Environmental and Sanitary Impacts of two fish Smoking Systems (Traditional Oven and FTT Oven) used by the Women of Guessabo (Ivory Coast)**

**Ossehin Ambroise <sup>a\*</sup>, Etchian Assoi Olivier <sup>b</sup>, Seka Yapoga Jean <sup>a</sup>, Gnagne Agness Essoh Jean Eudes Yves <sup>c</sup> and Yapo Ossey Bernard <sup>a,d</sup>**

<sup>a</sup> Environmental Sciences Laboratory (LSE), UFR of Sciences and Management of the Environment, Nangui Abrogoua University 02 BP 801 Abidjan 02, Ivory Coast.

<sup>b</sup> Laboratory of Animal Biology and Cytology, Nangui Abrogoua University 02 BP 801 Abidjan 02, Ivory Coast.

<sup>c</sup> Laboratory of thermodynamics and physical chemistry of the environment, UFR Applied Fundamental Sciences, Nangui Abrogoua University 02 BP 801 Abidjan 02, Ivory Coast.

<sup>d</sup> Central Environmental Laboratory of the Ivorian Center Antipollution (LCE-CIAPOL), 20 BP 650 Abidjan 20, Ivory Coast.

## **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author OA designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol, and drafted the first version of the manuscript. Author EAO, Author SYJ, and Author GAEJY devoted their time to reading and improving this paper. Author YOB designed the study, wrote the protocol and drafted the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

## **Article Information**

DOI: 10.9734/AJOCS/2022/v11i119114

### **Open Peer Review History:**

This journal follows the Advanced Open Peer Review policy. Identity of the Reviewers, Editor(s) and additional Reviewers, peer review comments, different versions of the manuscript, comments of the editors, etc are available here: <https://www.sdiarticle5.com/review-history/83094>

**Original Research Article**

**Received 06 January 2022**  
**Accepted 23 February 2022**  
**Published 24 February 2022**

## **ABSTRACT**

Women use traditional methods for smoking in Côte d'Ivoire. These methods have an impact on the environment and their health because of the emission of CO<sub>2</sub> which is a greenhouse gas and other gases (VOCs, PAHs...), carcinogenic and dangerous for the respiratory system. In 2013, an improved kiln, called FAO-Thiaroye Processing Technique (FTT) was introduced in Côte d'Ivoire in order to reduce the health and environmental impacts. The objective of this study is to compare the

\*Corresponding author: E-mail: osambenediedieu@gmail.com;

environmental and health impacts between traditional and improved ovens used by women in Guessabo. This study involved 45 fish smokers using traditional stoves, 34 smokers using FTT stoves and 50 controls. It was conducted from January to December 2017. The data collection methodology included questionnaire survey, interviews, observations, and medical prospection. Also, baseline spirometry and bronchial metacholine reversibility test in each woman were performed. Bronchial hyperreactivity was observed to be more frequent in women smokers who practice with traditional furnaces. Three measurement campaigns of Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), carbon monoxide (CO), volatile organic compounds (VOC) and Nitric oxide (NO) were carried out. The level of CO measured at the traditional sites varies from 19 to 184 mg/m<sup>3</sup>. It is often higher than the acceptable limit value (50mg/m<sup>3</sup>). However, these gas levels were very low with the use of FTT furnaces.

*Keywords: Fish smoking; environmental impact; health of women smokers; greenhouse gases; Guessabo.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Post-harvest losses are a recognized problems in sub-Saharan Africa.,. 25% of fish are lost due to lack of effective means of conservation and processing. Smoking is one of the means used to conserve and improve the availability of fish [1]. Particularly in Ivory Coast, smoking is used to stabilize perishable foodstuffs before they are transported from catching or farming sites to consumption areas [2]. Smoking is one of the main income-generating activities for many people, the majority of whom are women [3]. However, this smoking activity is generally carried out in precarious and arduous conditions due to the rudimentary equipment used [4]. The use of traditional equipment is not without consequences for the environment and the health of women producers. Moreover, smoking operations are conducted in thick layers of smoke and female operators are exposed to respiratory, ocular and even cardiovascular problems [5]. The study of the impact of fish smoking on safety and health in fishing communities is part of the concern to identify environmental risks and diseases related to the exercise of an economic activity largely dominated by women of modest conditions [6]. Traditional smoking burns large quantities of wood, leads to rapid destruction of forest cover, including mangrove forests; the production of a huge volume of CO<sub>2</sub> responsible for increased greenhouse gas emissions [6]. To solve these problems mentioned, FAO in collaboration with the Ministry of Animal and Fisheries Resources, Ivory Coast, has set up in the fish smoking sites platforms in Attécoubé, Marcory Anoumabo, Guessabo and Braffèdon (Grand-Lahou) that were equipped with improved ovens, commonly known as FTT ovens (FAO-Thiaroye Processing Technique) [7]. The FTT oven has become

widespread among fishing communities in Africa because of its ease of use and vast processing capacity. It requires little firewood, reduces smoking times, and produces high quality smoked fish [2]. Similarly, it reduces health risks, improves working conditions and reduces post-catch losses [8]. In addition, it contributes to the safeguarding of the environment because the fuels used for fish smoking are generally made of heat retention stone, agricultural biomass and very little coal [9]. The objective of this study is to compare environmental and health impacts between traditional ovens and FTT ovens used by female fish smokers in Guessabo (Ivory Coast). Specifically, the aim is to determine harmful gas levels at smoking sites according to the type of oven used, to assess their impact on the environment and on the health of female fish smokers.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2.1 Study Area

The study was carried out in Ivory Coast on the traditional and modern smoking sites of Guessabo. The sub-prefecture of Guessabo is located in the High Sassandra region, in the center-west of Ivory Coast. Administratively, it is part of the Department of Zoukougbeu. It is located between the parallels 6°44' North Latitude and 6°57' West Longitude and covers an area of 328 km<sup>2</sup>. The sub-prefecture of Guessabo has a large and mostly rural population. Its population is estimated at 8,288 inhabitants [10]. The main economic activities of this population are agriculture and fishing. The activity of smoking fish is prominent in this artisanal fishing community and is largely dominated by women [11]. These smoking sites were chosen in view of the dynamism of the

activity marked by the permanent occupation of the space, the large number of active women fish smokers and especially the establishment of FTT ovens.

## **2.2 Survey**

### **2.2.1 Study materials**

The instruments used to carry out the survey were: survey forms, a camera and a GPS. The survey form was used to collect precise information on smoking activities, diseases developed and health history. The equipment used for the medical survey consisted of pharmacological substances, two spirometers, two dosimeters, two pneumatic nebulizers, a stethoscope, a fundus and a slit lamp.

## **2.3 Methods and Techniques of Information Collection**

This stage was conducted in three phases from January to December 2017. The first allowed for findings and observations. The second, led to interviews with the managers of the different sectors related to the smoking activity. The third involved the questionnaire survey.

### **2.3.1 Observation phase**

Observation took place throughout the different surveys on the smoking sites. It was used to appreciate the daily experience of the women processors. In Guessabo, women smokers work individually, either in the open air or in concessions. The conditions under which these women carry out their activity, the type of equipment used and the immediate impact of this activity on the health of the producers were identified. Photographs were also taken to substantiate statements about the problems identified and their effects on the well-being of the women who process the fish into smoked products.

### **2.3.2 Interviews with managers of sectors related to the smoking activity**

This is an open exchange with young professionals and the women fish smokers of the

"AMAKPA" cooperative. Indeed, AMAKPA means in Gnaboua (an ethnic group of the Ivory Coast) unite us. This working session allowed to have information on the problems that women encounter in the framework of the exercise of the activity of fish smoking. These are health problems, problems of conservation of fishing products, insecurity and problems related to the associative life of women. A questionnaire was elaborated from this collected information.

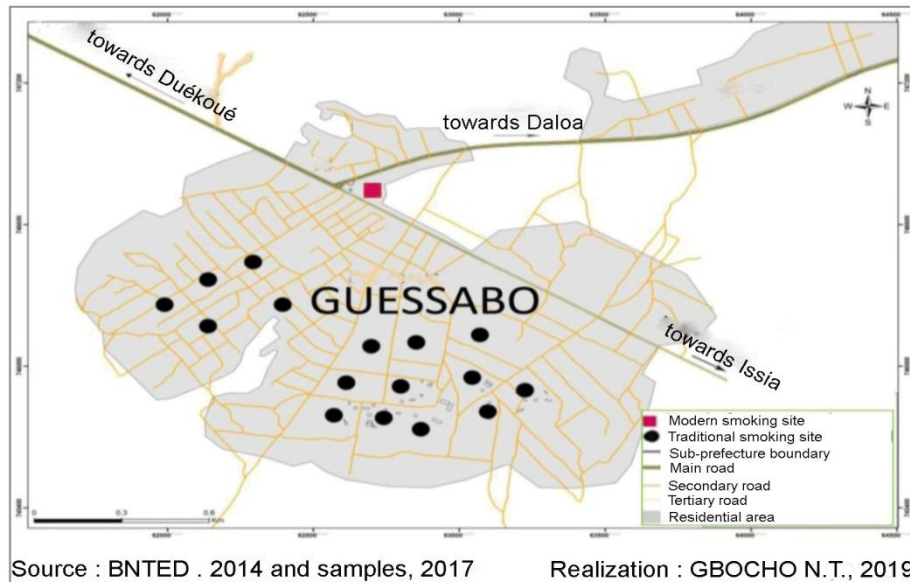
### **2.3.3 Survey by questionnaire**

The survey was conducted among women fish smokers in Guessabo. It allowed the determination of the number of women fish smokers per study area and to collect information on the socio-demographic profile of the women, their smoking activity, the fuels used and their personal and family health history. Using a GPS, the coordinates of the different smoking points were geo-referenced. The study included all women present and meeting the inclusion criteria. All women aged 18 years and older who had been smoking fish products at least 5 days per week for at least 2 years were included. Female fish smokers with a history of active and/or passive smoking, respiratory manifestations prior to smoking activity (asthma, tuberculosis, COPD, etc.) were excluded from the study. The study included 129 women consisting of 45 fish smokers using traditional ovens, 34 fish smokers using FTT oven, and 50 women who do not smoke fish (controls) engaged in other income-generating activities such as sewing, hairdressing, and marketing food crops.

## **2.4 Measuring Smoke Quality**

### **2.4.1 Measuring instruments**

Three measuring devices were used: KIGAZ 300 pro, MiniRAE 3000 and MultiRae Lite. The KIGAZ 300 pro combustion analyzer enables direct O<sub>2</sub> and CO analyzes in the combustion chamber to measure CO<sub>2</sub>, SO<sub>2</sub>, air temperature, fumes, pressure and to calculate the % CO<sub>2</sub> and the NO<sub>x</sub> content. The MiniRAE 3000 Portable Monitor can detect VOCs. The MultiRae Lite was used to determine the NO and CO.



**Fig. 1. Location of the fish smoking sites in Guessabo**

#### 2.4.2 Measurement methodology

Three measurement campaigns were carried out, from January to December 2017. The measurements were carried out on 2 modern ovens and 7 traditional ovens. Measurements were made over the ovens, at the women's resting point and beyond the ovens (4 to 12 meters from the ovens) according to the wind direction with a total of 126 measurements. Prior to the various gas measurements, the units were allowed to draw clean ambient air without smoke to establish the zero value of the sensors. To perform the gas measurements, the MiniRae 3000 and MultiRae Lite analyzers were held around the oven. However, the KIGAZ 300 Pro probe has been inserted into the oven.

#### 2.5 Statistical Analysis

Comparisons of respiratory symptoms were made using the Stata version 14 software. The statistical significance of the existence of a link between the different parameters was studied according to the case, by the Chi2 test or the Fisher exact test to the threshold of 5%. The comparison of the gas contents was carried out using the Kruskal-Wallis test at  $p < 0.05$ . Whenever this test revealed significant differences, the comparison was continued with the Mann-Whitney test at the 5% level. All

statistical calculations and graphs were done using the Statistica 7.1 software.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Results

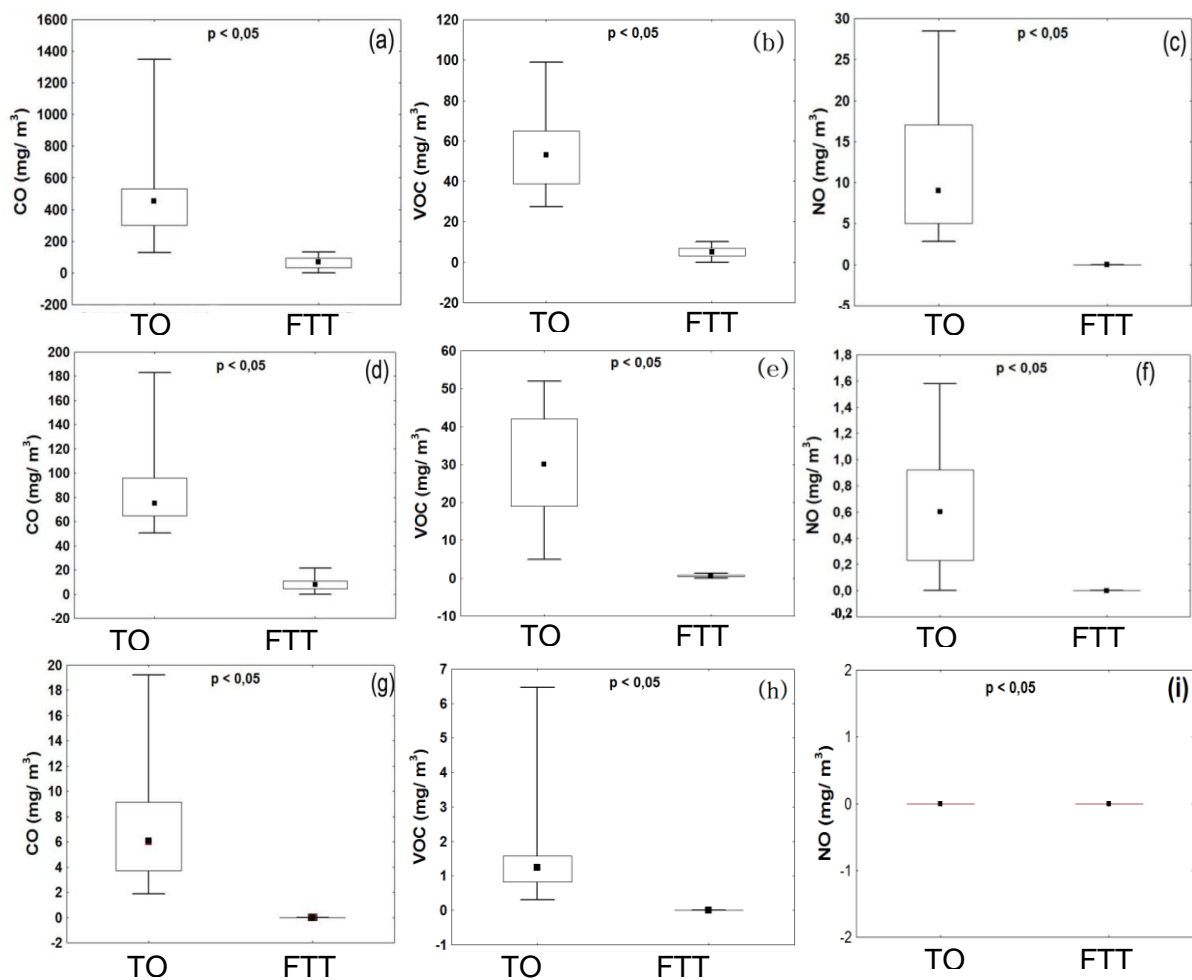
##### 3.1.1 Results of pollutant measurements

Table I shows the minimum and maximum values of CO<sub>2</sub>, CO, VOCs and NO measured in the traditional and FTT platforms. The gas values measured above the traditional furnaces range respectively from 126 to 1347 mg/m<sup>3</sup> for CO, 27.4 to 99 mg/m<sup>3</sup> for VOCs, 2.81 to 28.47 mg/m<sup>3</sup> for NO and 0.1 to 0.2% for CO<sub>2</sub>. Regarding the gas contents carried out at the resting point of women in the traditional platform, they vary respectively from 50.54 to 183 mg/m<sup>3</sup> for CO, 5 to 52 mg/m<sup>3</sup> for VOCs and 0 to 1.58 mg/m<sup>3</sup> for NO. The gas levels beyond the traditional furnaces range from 1.87 to 19.2 mg/m<sup>3</sup> for CO and 0.3 to 6.47 mg/m<sup>3</sup> for VOCs. Gas measurements at FTT sites are not often detected, but the highest levels recorded above the FTT furnaces are around 130 mg/m<sup>3</sup> for CO and 10.25 mg/m<sup>3</sup> for VOCs respectively. Similarly, the highest values at the women's resting point are 21.3 mg/m<sup>3</sup> for CO and 1.3 mg/m<sup>3</sup> for VOCs respectively. However, all gas measurements beyond the FTT ovens are almost zero.

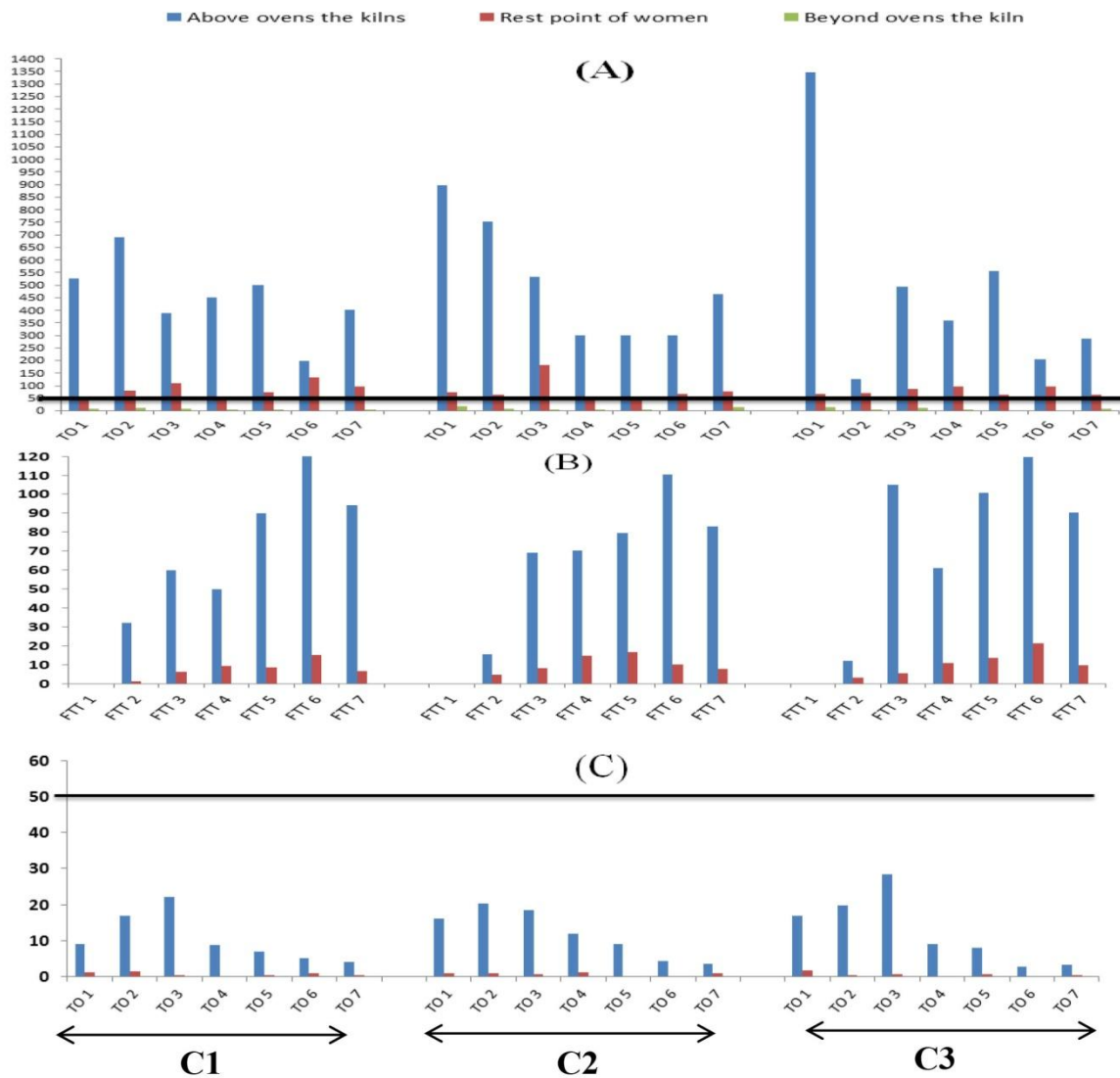
**Table 1. Minimum and maximum values of gas contents (mg / m<sup>3</sup>) measured above ovens, at the rest point of women and beyond ovens**

| Différent gases measure   | Traditionnel oven |           |           | FTT ovens |         |         |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|---------|
|                           | AO                | RPW       | BO        | AO        | RPW     | BO      |
|                           | Min-Max           | Min-Max   | Min-Max   | Min-Max   | Min-Max | Min-Max |
| CO (mg/ m <sup>3</sup> )  | 126-1347          | 50,54-183 | 1,87-19,2 | nd-130    | nd-21,3 | nd      |
| VOC (mg/ m <sup>3</sup> ) | 27,4-99           | 5-52      | 0,3-6,47  | nd-10,25  | nd-1,3  | nd      |
| NO (mg/ m <sup>3</sup> )  | 2,81-28,47        | 0-1,58    | nd        | nd        | nd      | nd      |
| CO <sub>2</sub> (%)       | 0,1-0,2           |           |           |           |         |         |

AO: above ovens, RPW: rest point of women, BO: beyond ovens, Min=minimum, Max = maximum, nd : not determined



**Fig. 2. Comparison of CO (a), VOC (b) and NO (c) level above the ovens, CO (d) level, VOC (e) and NO (f) at the women's resting point and CO (g), VOC (h) and NO (i) level beyond the ovens**  
 TO : traditional oven ; FTT : FAO-Thiaroye Processing Technique



**Fig. 3. Comparison of CO levels in the traditional site (A) and in the modern site (B) and NO levels in the traditional site (C) with the limit value**  
 C1: 1<sup>st</sup> Campaign; C2: 2<sup>nd</sup> Campaign; C3: 3<sup>rd</sup> Campaign; TK: traditional oven ; FTT : FAO-Thiaroye Processing Technique

**Table 2. Comparison of resting spirometric parameters in women who smoke fish than in those who do not**

| Paramètres spirométriques | Fish Smoking Women | Non-Fish Smoking Women | Test de chi 2 |
|---------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| FVC                       | 2,48               | 2,61                   | 0,19          |
| FEV1                      | 2,15               | 2,16                   | 0,91          |
| FEV1/VFC%                 | 85,48              | 83,41                  | 0,36          |
| PEF                       | 5,49               | 5,56                   | 0,85          |
| FEF25-75%                 | 2,63               | 2,57                   | 0,69          |
| VC                        | 2,67               | 2,52                   | 0,13          |
| MVVpre                    | 75,22              | 75,22                  | 0,93          |

FVC: Forced vital capacity; FEV1/VFC is the ratio of FEV1 to FVC; FEF25-75%: Forced inspiratory flow 25-75% ; PEF : Peak expiratory flow ; VC: Vital capacity ; MVV: Maximal Voluntary Ventilation

### 3.1.2 Variation in gas measurements at the oven level

Fig. 2 describes the variation in CO, VOC and NO levels measured above the ovens, at the women's resting point and beyond the ovens in the traditional and modern sites. The Kruskal-Wallis and the Man Withney tests show that the median values of CO, VOC and NO found in traditional sites are higher compared to those measured in modern sites.

### 3.1.3 Comparison of gas levels to limit values

Fig. 3 shows that all CO and NO levels measured above the traditional ovens were above the acceptable limit value of Decree N°. 2017-125 of February 22, 2017 on air quality in Ivory Coast (50 mg/m<sup>3</sup>). Regarding CO levels measured at the women's resting point at the traditional sites, out of the 21 measurements taken, 11 were above the acceptable limit value. On the other hand, all the CO levels measured beyond the traditional ovens were below the acceptable limit value. Similarly, of 21 CO measurements made above the FTT furnaces, 14 were above the acceptable limit value. However, all CO levels measured at the women's resting point and beyond the ovens in the modern site were below the acceptable limit value.

## 3.2 Pathological Events in Women

### 3.2.1 Replace with 'Comparison of resting spirometric parameters in fish smokers women and non-fish smokers

Table 2 shows the spirometric results recorded in female fish smokers who perform the activity of traditional fish smoking compared to those who do not. The measurements obtained from the

spirometric database in the two categories of women surveyed are similar. The Tiffeneau ratio (FEV1/FVC) did not allow the detection of an obstructive or restrictive ventilator abnormality because it is higher than 80%. Its normal value is about 0.75 (or 75%). Generally speaking, any value is considered normal if it is greater than or equal to 80%. A clear drop in this ratio, below 0.65, indicates an obstructive type of respiratory disorder (due to a decrease in the caliber of the bronchi), such as asthma and chronic obstructive bronchitis.

### 3.2.2 Comparison of resting spirometric parameters in female fish smokers according to the type of oven used

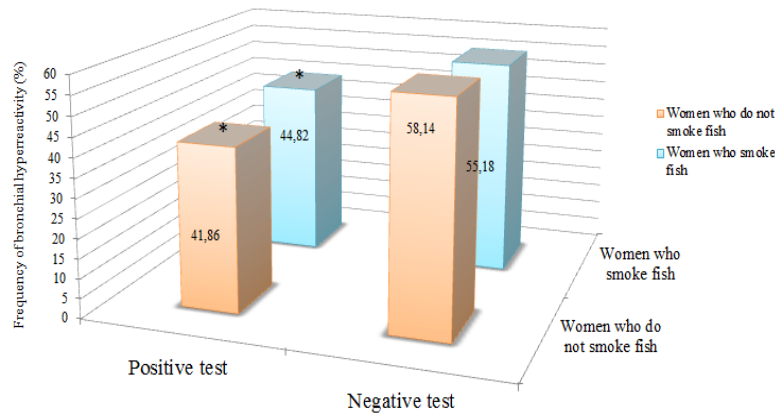
Table 3 shows the spirometric results recorded from female fish smokers according to the type of oven used. The measurements obtained from the spirometric base in the two categories of smokers surveyed are similar. The Tiffeneau ratio (FEV1/FVC) did not detect an obstructive or restrictive ventilatory abnormality because it was above 80%.

Tiffeneau's ratio (FEV1/FVC), sometimes expressed as a percentage, of forced expiratory volume in one second (FEV1) to vital capacity (V.C., the maximum volume the subject can inhale after maximum exhalation), used to assess the degree of bronchial obstruction. Tiffeneau's ratio, which is very commonly used, is calculated from the results of spirometry (an examination that measures lung volumes and flows). Its normal value is about 0.75 (or 75%). Generally speaking, any value is considered normal if it is greater than or equal to 80%. A clear drop in this ratio, below 0.65, indicates an obstructive type of respiratory disorder (due to a decrease in the caliber of the bronchi), such as asthma and chronic obstructive bronchitis.

**Table 3. Comparison of resting spirometric parameters of fish smokers using traditional ovens and those who use FTT ovens**

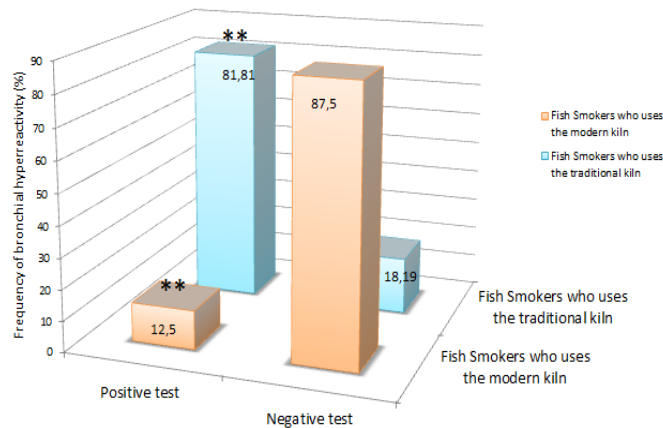
| Paramètres spirométriques | Fish smokers using traditional ovens | Fish smokers using FTT ovens | Test dechi 2 |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------|
| FVC                       | 2,43                                 | 2,40                         | 0,89         |
| FEV1                      | 2,02                                 | 2,20                         | 0,32         |
| FEV1/VFC%                 | 82,57                                | 82,04                        | 0,84         |
| PEF                       | 5,29                                 | 5,60                         | 0,62         |
| FEF25-75%                 | 2,21                                 | 3,09                         | 0,04         |
| VC                        | 2,54                                 | 2,62                         | 0,72         |
| MVVpre                    | 70,60                                | 76,94                        | 0,32         |





**Fig. 4. Frequency of bronchial hyperreactivity in women who smoke fish than in those who do not**

Legend: \* = Not significant; Chi2 test: Significant  $p < 0.05$



**Fig. 5. Frequency of bronchial hyperreactivity of fish smokers using traditional ovens and those who use FTT ovens**

Legend: \*\* = Significant, Chi2 test: Significant  $p < 0.05$

**3.2.3 Comparison of the methacholine bronchial challenge test in women who smoke fish than in non-fish smokers**

Fig. 4 shows the frequencies of bronchial hyperreactivity in female fish smokers compared to those who do not. The paraclinical analyses carried out in this artisanal fishing community showed that bronchial hyperreactivity in both categories of women is similar (44.82% versus 41.86%).

**3.2.4 Comparison of the methacholine bronchial challenge test in female fish smokers according to the type of oven used**

Fig. 5 shows the frequencies of bronchial hyperreactivity in women smokers according to the type of oven used. The paraclinical analyses

carried out in this artisanal fishing community showed that bronchial hyperreactivity is 6 times more frequent in women fish smokers who use traditional ovens than those who use FTT ovens with a significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**4. DISCUSSION**

The objective of this study is to highlight the deleterious effect of the fumes emanating from fish smoking on the health of the women fish smokers and the environment according to the type of oven used (traditional oven and FTT oven). The different gas measurements carried out above the ovens, at the women's resting point and beyond the ovens during the fish smoking activity in the traditional platforms, in contrast to those measured at the level of the modern platforms, showed a high emission of CO, which translates into incomplete combustion



of the solid fuels used, and also the presence of other gases such as VOCs and NO<sub>x</sub>. These results corroborate with those of Anoh et al. [6] who showed that the traditional ovens used by the Grand-Lahou processors emit more polluting gases compared to the FTT ovens. This is in line with the findings of Smith [12] on fuelwood use in developing countries who noted that small stoves do not properly burn fuelwood to become carbon dioxide. They emit gases such as carbon monoxide, benzene, butadiene, formaldehyde and many other harmful components. In addition to this, it is necessary to note the emission of carbon dioxide which reaches 0,2%, thus more than 0,04% of CO<sub>2</sub> emission (usual rate of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere). These gases emitted during the activity of fish smoking certainly have a considerable impact on the environment because CO<sub>2</sub> has the ability to absorb infrared radiation emitted by the earth system and contributes significantly to the natural greenhouse effect [13]. Similarly, CO, VOCs and NO<sub>x</sub> that were emitted, through complex chemical reactions, lead, in the presence of solar radiation, to the formation of ozone (O<sub>3</sub>) which is a greenhouse gas [14]. The results of the survey in the case of fish smoking activities in artisanal fishing communities showed that CO levels measured in the vicinity of women in traditional fish smoking sites (varies from 19 to 184 mg/m<sup>3</sup>) were often above the acceptable limit value (50 mg/m<sup>3</sup>). The duration of fish smoking in traditional sites often exceeds 2 hours. Yet, in 2016, WHO [15] has defined reference values for the whole population, including pregnant women and elderly people with heart or respiratory diseases (known or not), which are considered harmless depending on the duration of exposure: 10 mg/m<sup>3</sup> for 8 hours, 30 mg/m<sup>3</sup> for 1 hour, 60 mg/m<sup>3</sup> for 30 min, 100 mg/m<sup>3</sup> for 15 min [16]. Processors are therefore exposed to high levels of CO (varies from 19 to 184 mg/m<sup>3</sup>) over a long smoking period. The unawareness and lack of knowledge of the deleterious effects of smoke on human health by women smokers who work in traditional fish smoking sites without protective equipment posed negative effects on their health. Moreover, CO has a toxic effect even at very low volume concentrations, in prolonged exposure. Besides CO, which is more emitted, other toxic gases have been measured in traditional fish smoking sites. These are VOCs and NO. Thus, the VOC levels measured in the traditional fish smoking platforms were above the acceptable limit value. This could have impacts on their health because the study by Rouvière [17] showed that VOCs, in particular benzene, cause

damage to the central nervous system, irritation of the respiratory tract, conjunctivitis, haematological toxicity and risks of leukaemia. In addition, the paraclinical examinations carried out in the women allowed the diagnosis of the pathological manifestations which appeared in the subjects. The results obtained showed that the basic spirometry performed in women did not allow to detect a significant frequency of obstructive ventilatory disorder because the value of Tiffeneau's ratio (FEV<sub>1</sub>/FVC) is higher than 80% of the volume. Its normal value is about 0.75 (or 75%). Generally speaking, any value is considered normal if it is greater than or equal to 80%. A clear drop in this ratio, below 0.65, indicates an obstructive type of respiratory disorder (due to a decrease in the caliber of the bronchi), such as asthma and chronic obstructive bronchitis. But there is a high frequency of pathological manifestations in women fish smokers who use traditional ovens. These observations could be explained by the fact that in Guessabo, women smokers who use traditional ovens, those who use FTT ovens and who do not smoke often use solid fuels such as cocoa and coffee wood during their cooking activities. These results are in agreement with those of Anoh et al. [6] who showed that there is no significant difference when comparing respiratory and ophthalmological abnormalities between female fish smokers using FTT ovens and those exercising on traditional ovens, as well as those who do not smoke. In addition, the bronchial hyperreactivity test showed that female fish smokers had a proportion of bronchial hyperreactivity approaching that of non-smokers. However, bronchial hyperreactivity was 6 times more frequent in fish smokers using traditional ovens than in fish smokers using FTT ovens with a significant difference (p<0.05). This observation highlights the deleterious effects of fish smoking activity on lung function. These results are in agreement with Bamba [18] who showed that bronchial hyperreactivity was twice as common in female fish smokers with a significant difference. Then, Kwas et al [19] showed that one third of people living in rural communities in developing countries use biomass as a sole source of energy which has adverse effects on their health.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Traditional fish smoking techniques burn large quantities of solid fuels. The incomplete combustion of fuels emits toxic fumes with high concentrations of CO, VOCs, NO<sub>x</sub> and CO<sub>2</sub>. This

practice leads on the one hand to an increase in greenhouse gas emissions and on the other hand to toxic gases, dangerous for the health of fish smokers. Moreover, the results obtained in the artisanal fishing communities have highlighted the impact of traditional fish smoking on the health of women fish smokers. The baseline spirometry performed on fish smokers did not reveal a significant incidence of obstructive ventilatory disorder. However, the prevalence of bronchial hyperreactivity was significantly higher in fish smokers than non-fish smoke. Thus, this study confirmed the deleterious effects of fish smoking activity on the health of female fish smokers. The use of the FTT oven remains a hope to protect the health of women fish smokers and the environment because they emit less gas. Moreover, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has shown that the only real way to stop global warming is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The use of FTT furnaces is therefore one of the ways to fight climate change.

## CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, respondents' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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