

CAPE - Coalition pour des Accords de Pêche Equitables



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Small scale fisheries: Securing access to resources and markets

The case of Africa

The importance of small scale fisheries in Africa

The vast majority of the 12.3 million Africans engaged in fisheries and aquaculture are from the artisanal fishing sector: Over 7.5 million artisanal fishermen and 2.3 million women in fisheries provide income for millions of families in Africa.

The contribution of fisheries to the GDP of all African countries reached about 1,910,000 million US\$ in 2014, with a contribution of marine and inland artisanal fisheries accounting for more than half of this figure. This shows that artisanal fishing stimulates local economies, particularly when it is associated with policies to ensure social protection and promote the well-being of coastal communities.

By making fish, – a source of protein, fatty acids, vitamins, minerals – , available at low prices on local and regional markets, women and men from the African artisanal fishing sector also greatly contribute to food security: fish represents on average 22% of the protein intake in sub-Saharan Africa; however, in the poorest African countries, this level can exceed 50%.

When looking at small scale fisheries issues, it is important to consider not only the catching operations but the whole value chain, in particular the role played by women. Indeed, women in artisanal fisheries are not only the pillar of the artisanal fishing families, but are also present at all stages of the fisheries value chain: pre-financing and preparation of fishing campaigns; receiving, sorting out and dispatching fishermen catches; processing and marketing on local and regional African markets and even on international markets.

A growing international recognition of small scale fisheries

The importance of artisanal fishing for food security, national economies and employment, in Africa and elsewhere, is being increasingly recognized at international level. The adoption, in June 2014, of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food

Security and Poverty Eradication¹ (VGSSF) has played a major role for this enhanced recognition. The International Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure² also provide important recommendations for coastal communities depending on fisheries for their livelihoods.

Importantly, following the Rio+20 Conference, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14 includes, as a target, *'to provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets'*, with an indicator being the *'progress by countries in the degree of application of a legal/regulatory/policy/institutional framework which recognizes and protects access rights for small-scale fisheries'*.

More recently, the Conference of the FAO adopted, at its fortieth session in July 2017, a resolution towards the declaration of the *"International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture"*. It is now expected that the General Assembly of the United Nations will consider declaring the year **2022 as the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture**³. This will create an opportunity for all stakeholders, including in ACP countries, to contribute to the establishment of reformed national/regional policies to establish an enabling environment for sustainable small-scale fisheries.

But progress still needed at national level....

Despite the increasing international recognition, small scale fishing communities in Africa are still facing important problems. Competing sectors, that can often have stronger political or economic influence, include: industrial fisheries, tourism, aquaculture, agriculture, energy, mining, coastal industry developments.

Small-scale fisheries often struggle to compete with other sectors due to regulatory frameworks and policies that tend to ignore them.

The most common problems facing small scale fisheries, and where decisive action by States is needed, include:

1. Competing for access to fish

In many coastal ACP countries, the frequent incursions of industrial vessels, particularly trawlers, in the coastal area where artisanal fishers operate, result in the destruction of artisanal fishing gears, casualties, and fuel over-exploitation of fish resources in the coastal area.

It's necessary that States should design zones reserved exclusively to artisanal fishing, that are commensurate with artisanal fishing capacity – what can be caught sustainably by artisanal fishers should be left to them.

States should ensure these zones are protected against the incursions of industrial vessels, particularly trawlers, and that any violation of this zone by a trawler should be appropriately sanctioned.

These measures should be included in any fishing agreement that is signed with a third country/third country operators.

¹ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4356e.pdf>

² <http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/i2801e/i2801e.pdf>

³ <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mt441e.pdf>

Competition with industrial fishing: The case of joint ventures

If many vessels of foreign origin find their way to African waters through bi-lateral or private fishing agreements signed with third countries or private companies, there has been a wish from African coastal countries, to develop their national industrial fishing capacity, often under the guise of 'joint ventures' with a foreign operator who reflags its vessel(s) to the coastal country.

The constitution of such joint ventures is often based on very limited knowledge of ecosystems, fish stocks, or the dynamics of the fisheries sector and coastal communities.

In general, if public and private investment in the fisheries sector is to contribute to the sustainable development of fisheries, it is essential that 'a precautionary approach' towards such investment is adopted, taking into account the potential and needs of coastal communities and defining a set of principles that will allow these to be effectively handled within the framework of the tools available.

The guiding principles for a regulatory framework and for enterprises could be taken from existing international instruments, such as the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions, the Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters, and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises.

These principles could include the following:

- Conformity of investments with the policy objectives of the third country
- Transparency and disclosure of information
- Protection of the environment
- Fair contribution to public finances (tax)
- Participation of local communities in the host country

For more information

<http://www.cape-cffa.org/new-blog/2015/7/10/fishing-joint-ventures-operations-need-to-be-transparent-sustainability-framework-has-to-be-developed>

2. Protection from negative impacts of coastal industrial developments

Coastal pollution, resulting from industrial activity or from household's waste poured in the sea, are literally choking coastal eco-systems and fishing communities who depend on them for their livelihoods. Anarchic industrial development, – the exponential number of licensed fishmeal plants for example - , threatens fishing communities' access to fish as raw material for processing, thus jeopardizing food security.

For any policy or initiative that affects the coastal zone or coastal resources on which artisanal fishing communities depend for their livelihoods, impacts on artisanal fishing activities and on coastal ecosystems should be examined, involving fishing communities, and duly taken into account prior to adopting such policies or initiative.

3. Need to support innovation in small scale fisheries

In contrast with the general marginalization of artisanal fishing communities by policy makers, there exists a tremendous innovation spirit within fishing communities, including by women active in fisheries, who are putting in place and experimenting appropriate solutions to improve the living and working conditions within their communities (example: more efficient fish smoking ovens - FTT oven).

Such innovative actions put in place by the fishing communities themselves, towards improved working and living conditions in their communities, need to be adequately supported by access to credit, education and training, as well as social policies, with a particular attention to women involved in artisanal fisheries, as they are, in many occurrences, leading those changes.

Small scale fisheries and Blue Growth

Blue economy and blue growth are increasingly mentioned in relation to reform efforts in Africa and in ACP countries.

Arguably one of the most detailed and useful discussions on Africa's potential approach to blue growth was provided by the United Nations Economic Commission For Africa (UNECA) in its publication of "Africa's Blue Economy: A Policy Handbook". It contains very useful discussion on the risks presented by the Blue Economy idea, including for small-scale fisheries. While recognising the considerable potential for further economic growth in blue economy sectors, including mining and off-shore oil and gas, it highlights that pursuing blue growth could easily undermine many of the SDGs. It also highlights the need for developing innovative methods for measuring the benefits of the blue economy, beyond narrow economic measurements.

However, probably the most influential effort to implement a vision of blue growth is led by the FAO. The FAO's Blue Growth Initiative was launched in 2013 and focuses work in 10 developing countries, including the following ACP countries: Cabo Verde, Madagascar, Seychelles, Senegal, Kenya, Mauritania.

Given the importance of the small-scale fisheries sector in ACP countries, their role in livelihoods and food security, and also lower carbon emissions, there is a clear need for ACP States to place sustainable small scale fisheries at the heart of their blue growth/blue economy approach.

To ensure the approaches on Blue Growth deliver sustainable small scale fisheries, it will be important to consider the requirements established in the FAO's Guidelines on Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries and the International Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure.

These Guidelines provide a useful basis for advocating certain core principles for blue growth strategies that support SSF. The basic point of departure is that the blue economy or blue growth concept must give adequate attention to coastal communities and the overall objective is to promote sustainable use of the marine ecosystems that enhance development goals relating to food security, income security, human rights and good governance.

The following are some potential priorities for a blue growth that supports sustainable small scale fisheries:

A) The importance of integrated marine management

The idea of the Blue Economy/Blue growth is potential useful as it necessitates an understanding of how different sectors using the oceans are related to each other, and require so-called 'integrated marine management'. This is important for small scale fisheries, as in many areas coastal fishing communities are not considered when decisions are made in other blue economy sectors, such as tourism, mining and aquaculture. The need to include small scale fisheries in integrated marine management, and design participation mechanisms for small scale fishing communities in such management, is one aspect of Blue growth that needs to be emphasised.

B) Gender

Within the blue economy concept, the importance of gender needs to be stressed, given the fact that in many countries women play a key role in the local fisheries economy, but have tended to be marginalised in fisheries development efforts and are still often marginalised in decision making processes. If there is to be successful 'blue growth' then this must be designed in such a way to raise the profile of women in the blue economy, and strengthen their livelihoods and contribution to local communities. This may include, for example, investments in low carbon technologies that reduce health risks that affect many women in the sector. In addition, the blue economy/growth concept offers opportunities to ensure meaningful platforms for women's representation in decision making, including in existing professional organisations at the national and local level.

C) Blue economy and carbon emissions

A vision of the blue economy that supports small scale fisheries could emphasise the importance of moving towards low carbon emissions. There are several aspects to this. One is the argument that investments and support in the blue economy should prioritise those activities that have the least carbon emissions (and pollution more broadly). Forms of industrial aquaculture, mining, coastal tourism, are also potentially contributing to climate change and pollution, which negatively impacts the small scale fisheries.

However, the focus on blue economy also provides an opportunity for further investments and support to the SSF to reduce their carbon footprint. Again, one example of this lies with new technologies in the postharvest sector, such as more efficient fish smoking ovens and the sourcing of wood fuel from sustainable sources.

For more information, you can contact:

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