

Coping strategies of Senegalese fishers

Dr. Aliou SALL

**Socio-Anthropologist, Vice-President
Mundus maris
Sciences and Arts for Sustainability asbl**

Who are the actors we are talking about?



Experienced community leaders, e.g. Awa Seye, a municipal councillor and leader of the women in St Louis

Who are the people we are talking about?



Once traditional fisheries have doubled the number of boats in the last 10 years to 18,000 and employ large number of people, yet have to fight social marginalisation. Some other comparative characteristics to industrial vessels:

- They use less energy/unit catch
- They are usually less destructive
- They tend to be more selective
- They often produce high value fish.

Some indicators for contextualisation

- 7000 fish processors, among whom >90% women
- Each 'unit' employs 5-6 persons, depending on season, there are 35-40,000 jobs (6,600 in 2006)
- About 10,000 people are involved with fresh-fish marketing, of whom about 900 male and 2,500 female fish mongers (>4000 in 2006)
- Carpenters, mechanics, painters – >500 family companies need to be added too

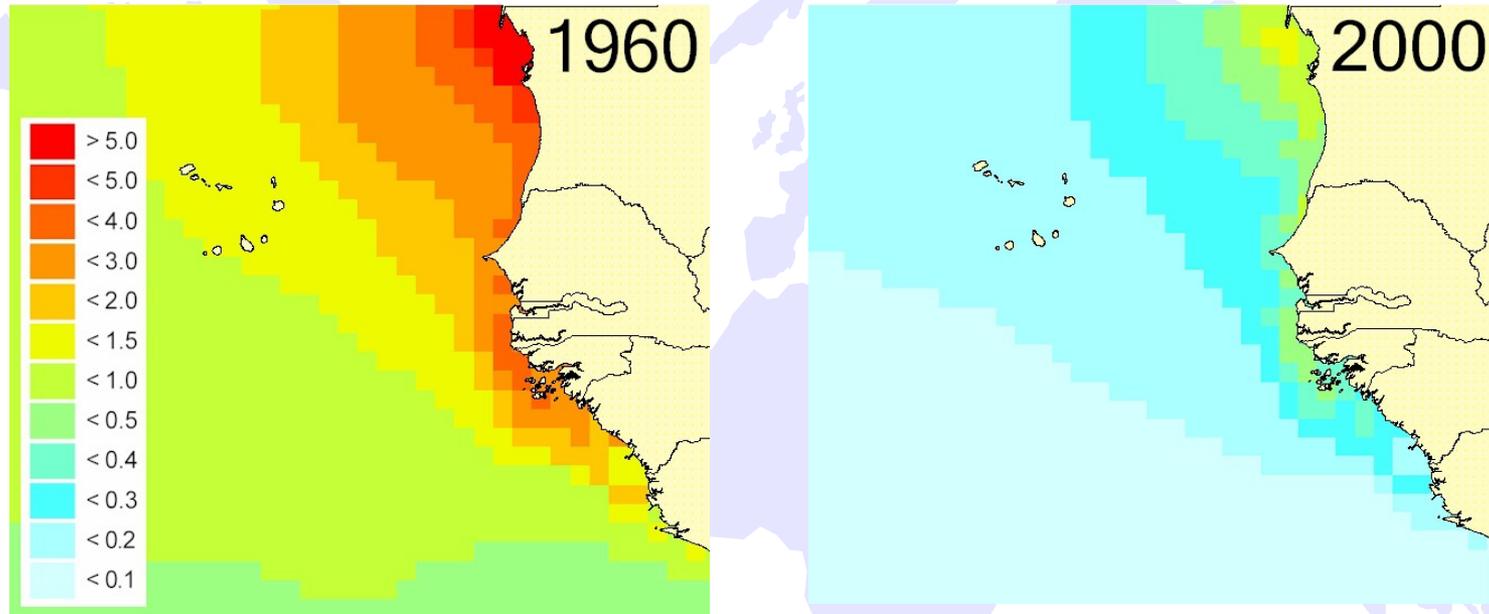
Family economy - multiple roles

- Technological innovation (encircling nets, purse seines) in the 1970s helped to increase the production of small pelagics by a factor of four as a result of a combination of favourable factors;
- The 'typical' family enterprise conferred significant influence to women, who often owned the pirogues and earned good money in fish processing and marketing, ensuring expansion of employment and social status.

Market- & technology-driven sequential overfishing and their social consequences

- With increased demand from national and international markets, also in the form of investors from outside the traditional fisheries (from Burkina Faso, China, Korea, ...) the fisheries expanded rapidly increasing the part of fresh and refrigerated produce;
- The rarefaction of high value demersals led to shifts in targeted species, high value invertebrates (octopus, shrimp, gastropods – sequential overfishing) and lately to targeting small pelagics as last resort

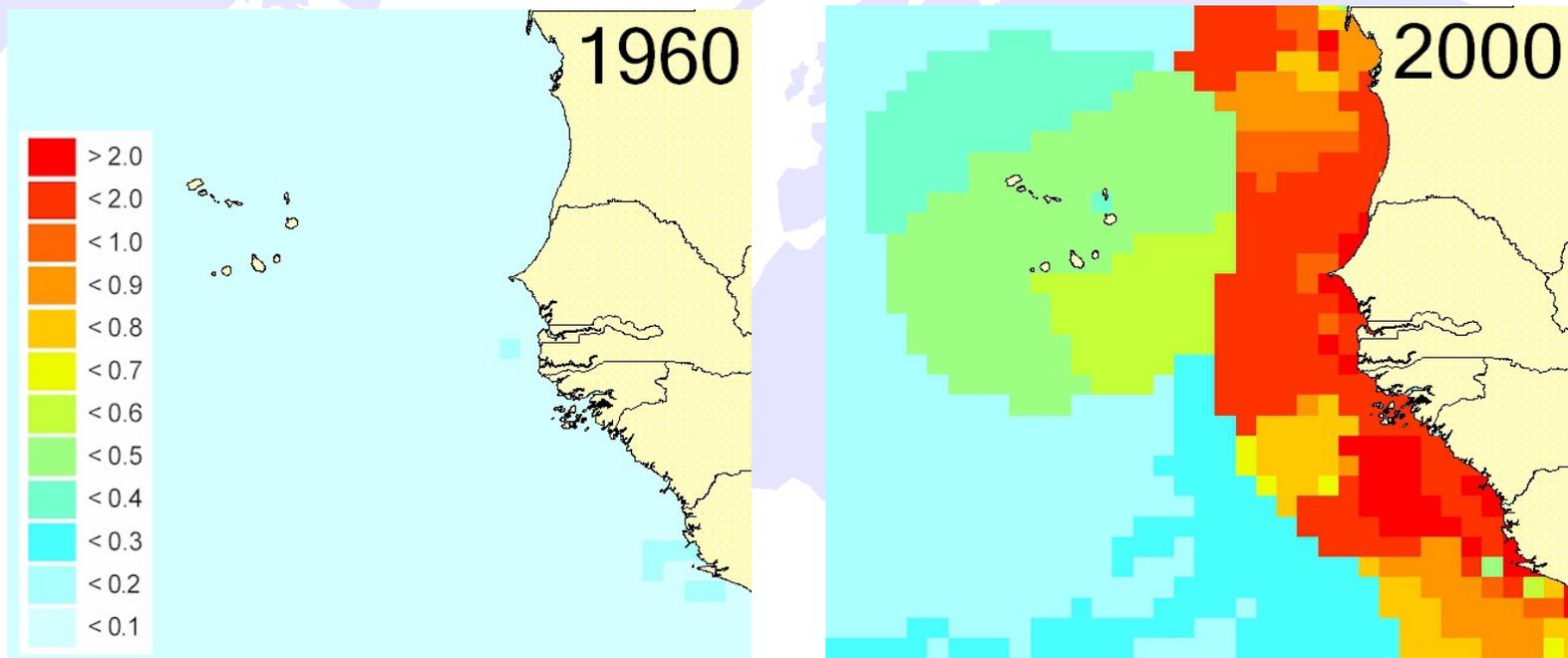
It's global (1)



Biomass distributions for fishes (trophic level ≥ 3.0 , excluding small pelagics and mesopelagics) off West Africa in 1960 and 2000 [tons per sq km]

Christensen *et al.*, 2004. Trends in Fish Biomass off Northwest Africa. pp 377-386 In: Pêcheries maritimes, écosystèmes et sociétés en Afrique de l'Ouest: un demi-siècle de changement. IRD & Commission Européenne.

It's global (2)



Fishing intensity (= catch/biomass ratio)

for fishes (trophic level ≥ 3.0) in units per year

Christensen *et al.*, 2004. Trends in Fish Biomass off Northwest Africa. pp 377-386
In: Pêcheries maritimes, écosystèmes et sociétés en Afrique de l'Ouest: un demi-siècle de changement. IRD & Commission Européenne

Social consequences

- Competition between local women (local fish processing) and external operators (fresh or iced produce) for access to raw material;
- Access to credit is difficult for women with subsequent loss of bargaining power in the fisheries economy;
- Difficulty to maintain (renew) family property (boats etc) as a way of controlling production means and maintaining authority;
- Impact of quantity and quality of self-consumption;
- Lack of resources to pay for medical treatment.

Response strategies (1)

Women:

- Keep as many of the family members within the family enterprise,
- Economic diversification (commerce of other products, petty trade),
- Invest more in the education of kids to get access to professional jobs outside fisheries (if possible); but in tough times kids are taken out of school, notably private schools, reducing options,
- Organise socially to defend women's access to space for fish processing in the context of tourist expansion and claim better social services.

Response strategies (2)

Men:

- Migration;
- Development of transshipment;
- Use of prohibited gear (monofilament) and reduction of fixed investment;
- Leasing of boats and equipment from factories and big fish mongers and accepting even unfavourable condition (more risk-taking than would be the case in more favourable situations);
- From specialisation to multitasking.

Points to consider for public policies (1)

- Issues transcend narrow sectoral definitions;
- They can be more usefully approached through spatial planning in search of negotiated reconciliation between competing demands on space and resources;
- Mistrust between different actors is deep rooted and so far few dialogue spaces exist where different perceptions can meet and discover common ground.

Points to consider for public policies (2)

Themes enabling positive movement towards addressing multiple crises could be:

- Clean-up of coastal areas (good for local inhabitants, for tourism, employment ...) as a non-contentious issue, but requiring considerable effort in organisation and consensus building;
- Reinstate enforcement of existing legislation and rules to reassert authority and confidence in institutions; with special attention to integrating social, economic and environmental dimensions which could enable sustainable fisheries.

**I'm still a baby,
let me live and grow**



www.mundusmaris.org www.facebook.com/MundusMaris

Thanks!

aliou@mundusmaris.org