



Conclusions and recommendations of the West and Central Africa Regional Consultation for developing a regional small-scale fisheries action plan for the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) within the African Union policy framework

Dakar, Senegal
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INTRODUCTION

The West and Central Africa Regional Consultation for developing a regional small-scale fisheries action plan for the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (SSF Guidelines) within the African Union policy framework was held in Dakar, Senegal, on 23-25 July 2018. It was convened for the West and Central African coastal countries that are members of the Fishery Committee for the Eastern Atlantic (CECAF) by FAO in collaboration with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the FIRST project, and the African Union Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR).

The consultation was attended by 70 participants including representatives of 19 governments¹ and the EU, regional and international organizations, fisherfolk organizations, NGOs, academia and other relevant actors.

The objectives of the consultation were to raise awareness of the important role of the small-scale fisheries sector and how this is addressed in the AU Policy Framework and Reform Strategy of Fisheries and Aquaculture (AU PF&RS), the ECOWAS regional fisheries and aquaculture policy under development supported by the FIRST project and the SSF Guidelines. It also provided an opportunity for experience sharing and to identify actions needed for supporting and promoting small-scale fisheries in the CECAF region.

Accordingly, the *expected outputs* of the consultation were:

- Participants have an increased understanding of the status and importance of small-scale fisheries in the region and of the relevant policy frameworks: the SSF Guidelines, the AU PF&RS and the ECOWAS regional policy formulation in the context of the FIRST programme;
- Priorities and actions, including potential resources and modalities have been identified for the implementation of a regional action plan for securing sustainable small-scale fisheries within the framework of the regional policy and the SSF Guidelines.
- Lessons learnt and experiences from past and ongoing initiatives relevant to small-scale fisheries governance and development have been shared;
- Recommendations for the CECAF Artisanal Fisheries Working Group and to the Africa Fisheries Reform Mechanism SSF Working Group.

¹Benin, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, Morocco, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo.

During 3 days, participants examined the current status of small-scale fisheries in the region, learned through thematic presentations, and discussed elements of a regional plan of action to support the implementation of the SSF Guidelines, in support of existing regional frameworks.

The workshop noted that small-scale fisheries are of major socioeconomic importance in the region, with some variations from one country to another. Small-scale fisheries is a dynamic and diverse sector using different gear types and targeting different species – in this case small pelagic species are particularly important in most countries in terms of food security and nutrition of populations. Co-management, and hence more participatory decision-making, is becoming more common in the region. Women play an important role but they are not always involved in decision-making. The need to ensure that fish products are accessible and affordable to ensure food security in coastal areas, and in the interior and in landlocked countries was stressed. There is growing competition over marine and coastal space by other sectors (e.g. oil and gas extraction) and actors (e.g. fish meal industry).

The workshop noted the need to include socio-economic aspects into fisheries management. The lack of data on small-scale fisheries, in particular on socioeconomic dimensions, is a challenge that needs to be addressed in this context, including through the involvement of small-scale fisheries actors. It was also noted that despite existing supportive frameworks, regional fish trade is often hampered in practice. Existing regional frameworks and initiatives like the AU PF&RS which specifically includes the implementation of the SSF Guidelines, and the FIRST programme in the context of ECOWAS were recognized. At the same time the workshop called for better communication and coordination of regional policies and strategies among different regional organizations and actors.

OUTCOMES OF WORKING GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Key priority areas to be considered further in national and regional implementation planning processes proposed by the workshop included:

Governance of tenure in SSF and resources management (chapter 5 of the SSF Guidelines)

- There is a need to *strengthen the collaboration and cooperation between states as well as fishing communities* in order to guarantee equitable access to fishery resources. Ways of doing this include having consultative councils or committees and fisheries management plans, which should be developed in close consultation with small-scale fisheries actors. CECAF has an important role to play at the regional level and the implementation of CECAF recommendations should be monitored.
- *Fishers and fishing communities are often not involved in the collection and use of data.* The capacities to collect data of fishers and their organizations should be strengthened. The development and use of guides and manuals, adapted for small-scale fishers, would be an important support in this respect.
- *Tenure legislation relevant to small-scale fisheries is often missing or not applied.* Regulations generally need to be updated and harmonized across the region and the capacity of governments to operationalize tenure legislation should be strengthened. Likewise, fishing communities and small-scale fisheries organizations need support to strengthen their capacities to access and understand legislation.
- *Development projects affecting the small-scale fisheries sector are often developed without involvement of fishers and their communities.* They should be consulted and their priorities taken into consideration. Commissions or committees in charge of small-scale fisheries issues, where they exist, should be strengthened.
- There is a *mismatch between the existing fishing capacity and the productivity of the fishery resources* available to small-scale fisheries. There needs to decrease the fishing capacity to



ensure a sustainable use of resources. Management measures currently used in countries in the region include quotas, closure of fisheries to allow stocks to recover and closed seasons. Stock assessments of shared resources should be carried out and management plans developed and implemented accordingly.

Social development, employment and decent work and gender equality (chapter 6+8 of the SSF Guidelines)

- *Competition over space used by small-scale fisheries* occurs in the region due to tourism development, oil/gas exploration, marine protected areas (MPAs) and industrial fisheries. This is caused by lack of socio-economic considerations in marine spatial planning and impact assessments, as well as by the lack of status of the small-scale fisheries sector. A human rights-based approach is therefore needed to ensure securing sustainable small-scale fisheries. Participatory mapping of small-scale fisheries sites should be conducted and inform policies and regulatory frameworks.
- *Resilience to the impact of climate change* which affects the livelihoods of small-scale fisheries needs to be ensured. The erosion of coastal areas is recurrent in the region, but the comparably high level of adaptive capacity of small-scale fisheries compared to industrial fisheries should be further developed. Climate change impact assessments on small-scale fisheries should be conducted to inform the development of specific adaptation plans.
- *Better access to alternative livelihoods, social amenities and improved landing sites* should be provided to stabilize local communities and reduce incentives to migrate. Exploratory surveys on alternative livelihoods should be conducted, and good practices should be documented and shared, and related training be provided. At regional level, migrant activities, including cross-boarder trade, should be documented and specific protocols for intra-regional trade of fish products should be developed or implemented. There is currently no regional mechanism that facilitates migration and protects migrating workers.
- *Access to information for small-scale fisheries*, e.g. in relation to safety at sea issues, trade rules etc. to sensitized about regulations, rules and rights is of fundamental importance to support sustainable small-scale fisheries. This requires the development of information in local languages, and simplified versions, videos etc. targeted at different audiences and related advocacy campaigns for dissemination. Governments should partner with Too Big Too Ignore (TBTI) and join the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) and sign Memorandums of Understanding to share information about small-scale fisheries in the region.
- *Access to financial services, savings and social protection*, in particular for women and youth, is currently often a challenge for small-scale communities in the region. A reason for this is the lack of visibility of the contribution of the sector. There is hence a need to provide these services as well as innovation and technology, also to enable small-business development, better handling practices, improved products and access to markets. Good practices should be shared across the region and small-scale fisheries organizations' capacities in providing/accessing financial services need to be strengthened.

Value chains, post-harvest and trade (chapter 7 of the SSF Guidelines)

- In the post-harvest sector, there is a need for *investments in appropriate infrastructures and technologies*. Good practices exist in several countries in the region with regard to integrated centers for fish processing and marketing, which include both technical and social infrastructure (e.g. child care facilities). When planning such infrastructure investments, it is crucial to consult with the future users and those who will manage the center to ensure that the facilities are appropriate and that there are already from the beginning plans for management and maintenance. However, as a first activity, it is recommended that a baseline is carried out at the national level to get a better understanding of the needs and to establish what already exists.



- *Value chain actor organizations need to be strengthened and their capacities developed* to allow for their enhanced participation in decision-making processes as well as in the management of infrastructure and facilities mentioned above. Initiatives should have a special focus on women as they are main actors in the post-harvest sector and include, among other things, leadership training and sharing of good practices, both through guides and exchange visits. Training material already exists in some countries and with some organizations and building on existing experiences, training modules that are adapted to local needs should be developed and implemented.
- *Post-harvest losses and waste need to be addressed* and efforts made to increase the added value. This would lead to both increased earnings of postharvest workers and reduced negative impact on the environment. There is also a need to improve and facilitate regional trade and promote the use of post-harvest practices that comply with existing relevant sanitary and quality standards.
- *Post-harvest actors, in particular vulnerable and marginalized groups as well as women and youth, are rarely part of fisheries decision-making processes.* This situation needs to be changed and the capacities of vulnerable and marginalized groups need to be developed. Small-scale fisheries organizations – at local, national, regional and international levels – should ensure that their decision-making processes are gender balanced and that men and women have equal opportunities to make their voices heard.

Climate change and disaster risks (chapter 9 of the SSF Guidelines) was considered throughout the discussions as cross-cutting issues.

NEXT STEPS

Concrete mechanisms, including tools, are needed to implement the SSF Guidelines in the context of existing relevant regional frameworks, policies and initiatives. This also requires collaboration, funding and support from governments, regional organizations, small-scale fisheries organizations and other technical and financial partners. Accordingly, the workshop identified the following next steps:

- *Workshop participants* should report back outcomes of the meeting to governments, colleagues, and partners, including on recommended actions. They should also identify other opportunities to raise awareness and disseminate the SSF Guidelines and related good practices in the context of the AU PF&RS and act as champions for the SSF Guidelines at relevant meetings and events. They should in general advocate for small-scale fisheries at the highest levels and encourage the upscaling of good practices.
- *Governments* should consider the outcomes of the consultation in their relevant policies and strategies, and ensure the inclusion of small-scale fisheries actors in decision-making processes. They should present requests for support to small-scale fisheries to development partners. Governments should prioritize increased support to small-scale fisheries, including in regular budget provisions, in line with their commitment to implementing the SSF Guidelines and the pan-African reform strategy for fisheries and aquaculture in Africa.. They should also ensure that access agreements do not harm small-scale fisheries/provide protection mechanisms. Governments should better recognize the role of women in small-scale fisheries and overall development.
- *Regional economic communities (RECs)* should support the sustainable development of small-scale fisheries in their food security and poverty reduction strategies.
- The workshop results should be presented at the forthcoming 5th session of the *CECAF Artisanal Fisheries Working Group* on 26-27 July 2018 in Dakar, Senegal. The CECAF Artisanal Fisheries Working Group should compile, collect and analyze socio-economic and environmental data on small-scale fisheries to improve the sector's visibility. This should be



done through a transdisciplinary approach. CECAF should establish a web site for information sharing.

- The *AU* should continue to advance the implementation of the policy objective of the PF&RS in relation to small-scale fisheries, and allocate specific funding to small-scale fisheries development.
- *Regional organizations (e.g. FCWC, SFRC, COREP)* should advocate in support of small-scale fisheries in the sub-regions. They should also collaborate with development partners to develop small-scale fisheries projects and management plans, and develop research capacity of national members in relation to environmental and governance aspects of small-scale fisheries. They should also provide capacity development on SDG 14.b/SDGs to support sustainable ocean/coastal management and inland fisheries. Regional organizations should further improve their coordination at regional and sub-regional level.
- *CAOPA/WANSAFA/WADAF/PRCM* should share the outcomes of the consultation with their members and organize advocacy/capacity development in the support of the SSF Guidelines implementation, e.g. during World Fisheries Day celebrations – also in partnership with regional organizations and others.
- *Development partners* should consider the outcomes of the regional consultation and provide specific funding lines in support of small-scale fisheries. They should also ensure that all projects relevant for small-scale fisheries take into account the SSF Guidelines as criteria for approval of funding (including for non-fisheries projects)
- *FAO* should continue to provide support to efforts to implement the SFF Guidelines at national and regional level, in the context of the African Union Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa. FAO was invited to organize a similar event on inland fisheries in the context of the implementation of the SSF Guidelines at the continental level.

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