



Stronger bottom-up initiatives underpin opportunities for global solutions

Prof. Stella A. Williams
Vice President, *Mundus maris* asbl

«Mers d'Afrique : enjeux stratégiques dans un monde hyperconnecté et hyperconflictuel»
Africa's Seas: Strategic Stakes in a Hyperconnected and Hyperconflictual World, Rabat 13/05/26



Increased fishing costs have repercussions

- Overfishing driven mostly by industrial fleets, incl. IUU fishing, has increased costs also for small-scale fishers (bigger canoes, longer trips). African artisanal fishers are brave and competent, but can not compete directly with industrial fishing vessels.
- Export orientation can threaten local food security, but can also be source of SSF income.
- Fishmeal factories offer higher prices, encouraging opportunistic sales, fishers now demand immediate cash, also from women fish mongers, breaking traditional trust-based systems
- Women lose market share, income, community status, and ability to feed families.
- Opportunities for strong local and regional economies are foregone



Photo P. Bottoni

Literature, sample

Pauly, D. et al. 2025. From Science to Conscience: The Plunder of Senegal's Fisheries Resources, or Europe's Role in the Making of a Migration Crisis. In *Proc. Paris Inst. Adv. Study* (Vol. 21). <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15833918>



Fighting IUU fishing to protect African resources

- **South Africa is a trail blazer** in the fight against illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing that is affecting also other African countries with once very abundant fish resources, but weak surveillance capacities of their EEZs.
- South Africa adopted the **Port State Measures Agreement**, the only binding international treaty specifically designed to eradicate IUU fishing. Ports are vulnerable entry points for criminal acts
- Intercepted four Chinese vessels in Feb.'26 fishing without permit and switching off AIS repeatedly. But fines are low compared to gains from illegal activities.
- According to <https://www.iuufishingindex.net/> China is #1 and has largest global fleet



Africa Defence Forum. <https://afrimagazine.com/2025/04/south-africa-cracks-down-on-iuu-fishing-by-foreign-trawlers-28/04/2025/> Pic: Getty Images





Updating the fisheries legislative framework

In São Tomé e Príncipe, FAO has supported the process of updating the legislative frameworks:

- regulation of fishing activities for sust. production,
- co-management of fisheries resources with fishing communities,
- marine environment protection,
- more monitoring, control and surveillance to combat IUU fishing,
- better infrastructure.



Photo: FAO / Joaquim dos Santos



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Rethinking local strengths

- Artisanal fishing in the Gulf of Guinea is often dominated by migratory ethnic groups like the Fante, Ewe, and Ga, shaping regional trade networks
- In Nigeria, artisanal fisheries rely heavily on coastal lagoons, rivers, and inland waters, linking fishing livelihoods with local commerce
- Extending the exclusion zone in Ghana to 12 nm has potential to reduce direct competition with industrial trawlers and regenerate resources
- Lowering fuel expenditures through near shore fishing and using more renewables, also in processing and marketing, could stimulate frugal innovation and strengthen home grown economics



Photo H. Bieser on Pixabay

Literature, sample:

Overå, R. 2005. Institutions, mobility and resilience in the Fante migratory fisheries in West Africa. *Trans.Hist.Soc.Ghana*, N.Ser. 9:103-123

Uduji, J.I. & Okolo-Obasi, E.N. 2020. Does corporate social responsibility (CSR) impact on development of women in small-scale fisheries of sub-Saharan Africa? Evidence from coastal communities of Niger Delta in Nigeria. *Mar.Pol.*



SSF Academy towards collective action

- People are at the centre of change, supported by family and community networks
- *Mundus maris* Small-scale Fisheries Academy promotes inclusive, respectful multi-stakeholder dialogue
- Encourages joint learning, co-creation of knowledge, and innovation aligned with SSF Guidelines & local benefits
- Small successes build trust, confidence, and capacity for advocacy and collective action
- Empowers participants (e.g., Nabia) to pursue larger development goals



Photo MF Arraes Treffner

Nauen, C.E. and Arraes Treffner, M.F. 2021. Translating SSF Guidelines into practice with the Small-Scale Fisheries Academy. *Frontiers Mar. Sci.*, 8 <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2021.730396>

Mundus maris 2021. Learning steps with the Small-Scale Fisheries Academy. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gX8u1nLOD-c>



SSF Academy helps innovation

- Lagos State University (LASU-CESAR) and *Mundus maris* led practical innovation workshop
- Water hyacinth converted into biochar and smokeless briquettes
- Plant stems processed into handcrafted bags and decorative items
- *Sargassum* transformed into livestock feed
- Demonstrates turning environmental challenges into income opportunities
- Such initiatives can scale when supported



Source: ***Mundus maris*** 2026.

<https://www.mundusmaris.org/ocean-literacy-and-outreach/turning-a-water-pest-into-a-source-of-income/>



SSF Academy can scale

- A mosaic of home-grown innovations in coastal West African countries using the creativity of successful small-scale operators, men and women, reduces vulnerabilities from external shocks
- Small-scale **solar solutions** provide answers where capital costs for African investors are still an obstacle to scale: Fraunhofer Institute (Prof. Schade) develops with African groups e.g. photovoltaic array for clean water or mobility; electricity storage is in sturdy portable lithium batteries e.g. in The Gambia, Tanzania.
- Investing in people for proud branding of local products, processes, and practices can cross-stimulate high-end eco-tourism – take cues from successful African textiles, arts and fashion designers



Solar ferry in The Gambia Source: voltviewafrica.org

Literature, sample

<https://nachrichten.idw-online.de/2023/07/20/voltviewafrica-electrifies-fishing-boats-in-gambia-with-sustainable-technology-by-fraunhofer-hhi>

England, L., Ikpe, E., Comunian, R. and Kabir A.J. (2021). Africa fashion futures: Creative economies, global networks and local development. *Geography Compass*, 15(9) e12589 <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12589>



Call to action: from Africa to the world

- **Small-scale fisheries** at the centre of a sustainable blue economy
- Strengthen local organisational and technical capacities; respect and emphasise **cultural heritage** for buy-in Pacific unites behind Tuvalu
- **Connect** international agreements to local experience to enhance agency, confidence and fairness, fight IUU fishing
- It is important for all African countries to ratify the BBNJ Treaty to sit at the decision table at COP1 in Jan. 2027 (18 out of 56 ratified, 36 signed)
- Be among the early movers in the **transition away from fossil fuels** – 60 countries were at the first conference in Santa Marta, Colombia hosted by Colombia and the Netherlands. **Focus on Future**



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Pacific unites behind Tuvalu

Literature, sample

Basurto, X., et al. 2025. Illuminating the multidimensional contributions of small-scale fisheries. *Nature*, 637:875-884.

ISSAfrica. <https://futures.issafrica.org/blog/2026/As-the-BBNJ-Agreement-takes-effect-Africa-must-lead-from-the-helm>

Fossil Fuel Treaty. Breaking the climate conference deadlock. <https://www.fossilfueltreaty.org/conference>



Small selection of addit. literature

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- Ameyaw, A.B., Breckwoldt, A., Reuter, H., Aheto, D.W. (2025). From fish to cash: Analyzing the role of women in fisheries in the western region of Ghana. *Mar. Pol.* 113, 103790.
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- Williams, S. (2021). How IUU Fishing impacts small-scale fishers' lives. Presentation at the SWAIMS Webinar "Curbing Maritime Insecurity in the Niger Delta", March 31, 2021



Thanks for your attention

***Mundus maris* looks for collaboration**

More Info:

www.mundusmaris.org

info@mundusmaris.org

