

VOICES FROM AFRICAN ARTISANAL FISHERIES

Calling for an African Year of Artisanal Fisheries



This report has been compiled by Mediaproduct, on behalf of CAOPA and REJOPRAO



Réseau des Journalistes pour une Pêche Responsable en Afrique de l'Ouest



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RESPONSIBLE EDITOR: Gaoussou Gueye, General Secretary of CAOPA, M'bour Senegal

TRANSLATED FROM FRENCH by Aboubacar Alpha Barry and Béatrice Gorez

PROOF READING: Sara Fröcklin

PHOTO CREDIT: Inoussa Maiga and Demba Camara (p. 25, 29, 30)

COVER PHOTO: Mats Hellmark

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FOREWORD

PUTTING ARTISANAL FISHING COMMUNITIES UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

From Senegal to Togo, from Guinea-Bissau to Mauritania, from Tunisia to Ghana, communities living from maritime fisheries show the same attachment to the sea and face the same challenges.

Between September 2014 and November 2015, the West African Network of Journalists for Responsible Fisheries (REJOPRAO), in collaboration with the CAOPA, went to meet artisanal fisheries stakeholders in these six countries.

In each country, we visited fishing sites, had exchanges with groups of men and women living from fishing, made individual interviews and did documentary research. The goal was to better understand and honestly describe the realities in which fishing communities have to live and work, and the challenges they face. And to show also that, beyond the often unreliable statistics, African artisanal fisheries are composed of men and women who want to be heard.

Built around a series of six field reports, this publication gives the floor to artisanal fisheries stakeholders, who share with us their fears and their hopes for the future of their activity. We wanted to shine some light on artisanal fisheries. In no case, we claim that this publication gives the full picture of the situation in the countries we visited.

Our gratitude goes to all those who contributed, in different ways, to the production of this report.

On behalf of the REJOPRAO

Inoussa Maiga
President



PREFACE

AFRICAN ARTISANAL FISHERIES AN ASSET FOR 21st CENTURY SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGES

The vast majority of the 12.3 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, 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%.

The importance of artisanal fishing for food security, national economies and employment, in Africa and elsewhere, is being increasingly recognized by decision-makers. The adoption, in June 2014, of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines to ensure the sustainability of the artisanal fisheries in the context of food security and eradication of poverty (VGSSF) has played a major role for this enhanced recognition.

To promote the implementation of these international guidelines at Pan-African level, CAOPA is proposing that the African Union declares an African Year of Artisanal Fisheries. This would create an opportunity for all stakeholders to contribute to the establishment of reformed policies in African countries, towards the sustainable development of our sector.

To achieve such reforms, we need everyone on the deck, in particular the men and women who depend on fishing for their livelihood. Thus, within CAOPA, men and women are represented equally, whether in our steering committee or in our activities.

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.

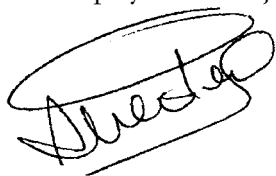
Challenges to achieve such policy reforms at Pan-African level are numerous and increasing, such as the need to improve the resilience of African artisanal fishing communities in the face of climate change.

In this publication, you will listen to fishing communities in some of our member countries: Senegal, Mauritania, Guinea-Bissau, Tunisia, Togo and Ghana. Women and men from fishing communities describe their daily difficulties for accessing the fisheries resources; the incursions from industrial trawlers in their fishing zones; the coastal pollution; the lack of policy-makers interest for their sector, etc. This constant struggle to make a living, and the hurdles they face, prevents them from expressing their potential as contributors to food security, to job creation in coastal areas, and to the overall economy of their respective countries.

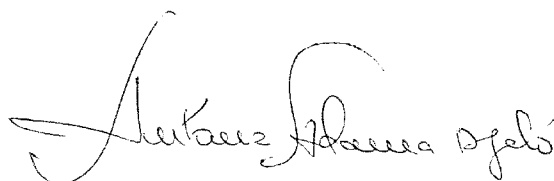
In the following pages, men and women from fishing communities are also sharing their ideas and the good practices they have put in place to remedy the problems. We also asked scientists, decision makers and NGOs to give their views on the main challenges identified.

With this report, we want to show that every African citizen voice counts when it comes to reform our policies towards sustainable and fair fisheries. We want to highlight that African artisanal fisheries sector is not a problem, but is part of the solution.

We hope you will enjoy sharing our lives and dreams!

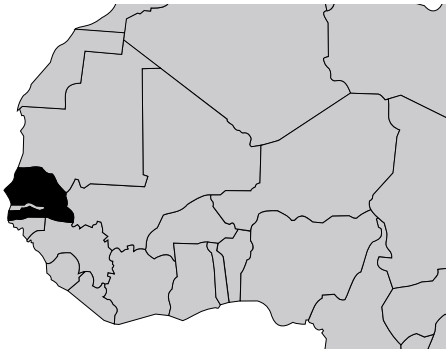


Sid Ahmed Abeid
President



Antonia Adama Djalo
Vice-President of the CAOPA

SENEGAL



THE ARTISANAL FISHERY IN CRISIS

A largely uncontrolled increase in the number of fishermen and of the fishing effort; a very often conflictual cohabitation with the industrial fishing vessels: In Senegal, the artisanal fishery is only but a shadow of itself. Their minds haunted by fish resource scarcity, fishermen are taking more risks to bring back fish.

In the neighborhood of M'bour, a 75 year old fisherman, Alioune Ndoye, known as Badou, lives with his family. Old photos, souvenirs of sea trips, drawings of pirogues, posters and some certificates of acknowledgment adorn the wall of his bedroom: "In 1956, I started the job as an artisanal fisherman and three years later, I was promoted captain of the pirogue that belonged to my father and my mother. After several decades of intense activity in this sector, I stopped in 2009", says Captain Badou.

A privileged witness of the evolutions in Senegalese artisanal fishing sector, Alioune Ndoye confides that fish is getting scarcer. "In Mbour, in the past, we used to have fish in abundance and the fishermen did not need to spend many hours or stay overnight at sea to catch it", he recalls. These times are now by-gone. This is confirmed by Ngalla Guèye, also a fisherman in M'bour: "Sometimes, after a long fishing day, I come back empty handed, not even able to cover the fuel costs. This is not because all fishermen go to the same area at the same time, but simply because we no longer have fish in our waters", he bursts out.

IRRESPONSIBLE FISHING PRACTICES

Indeed, the industrial and artisanal fishing boats are mercilessly racing to catch fish. This situation seems to affect with more acuity the artisanal fishing sector, which lands 80% of the fish in the country. At the same time, artisanal fishermen have a big responsibility in the current situation. "The fisherman is like the fish, once in the water, he does what he wants", regrets Mamboup War, fish processing woman in Thiaroye-sur-Mer. "Once the fish gets scarce, some local fishermen will use the most destructive and desperate means to secure their catches, for instance using nets with very small mesh, not to mention the dynamite", notes Chérif Younouss Ndiaye, Vice-President of the Association for the Promotion and Empowerment of the Artisanal Fishing Stakeholders in M'bour (APRAPAM).

Mainly occurring in the region of Dakar, fishing with dynamite is now extending to other regions like Thiès on the Petite Côte. This practice causes severe damage to the marine habitat. Despite it being forbidden by law, another material, – the nylon mono-filament net-, is gaining ground, and has become a favorite gear for many fishermen. “90% of the pirogues use mono-filament. It is contradictory to allow the sale of something we are forbidden to use”, regrets Abdou Karim Sall, fisherman and President of the Joal-Fadiouth Marine Protected Area (MPA). Considered more efficient for catching fish, fishermen can’t help using nylon mono-filament, and the State of Senegal fails to take action. “Some fishermen, – those using nylon mono filament nets-, are no stranger to the scarcity of fish that we are facing now. When fishermen loose these nets at sea, they end up cluttering the rocks which are the best fish reproduction areas and this disturbs the fish”, moans Captain Badou.



Badou Ndoye.

FAULTY GOVERNANCE AND SURVEILLANCE

Such problems in the fishery sector in Senegal can also be explained by the shortcoming in the governance and the surveillance. In more than one way, the State of Senegal fails to take up its responsibilities. At the level of the artisanal fishing sector, this failure to take action translates by a largely uncontrolled growth of the number of pirogues. “A farmer leaving his remote village, having no idea about fishing, can come here, have a pirogue built and declare himself a fisherman. It is this uncontrolled access to the resource that causes the problem”, explains Oumar Ndiaye, from the fisheries administration in charge of surveillance in M’bour. “The multitude of pirogues in Senegal is a problem for the artisanal fishing sector itself. And the State of Senegal is the first culprit. There was a time when it was possible to identify who was a fisherman and who was not. Today, it is no longer the case”, adds Alioune Ndoye.

To address this issue, the Senegalese administration wants to regulate the access to the fisheries through the implementation of the artisanal fishing permit. In place since 2005 (Ministerial Decree n°005916 of October 25th, 2005), the implementation of the artisanal fishing permit systems encountered many difficulties. Many fishermen simply refuse to abide by this decree: “The State has failed in its mission – we have to be able to identify who is fisherman. Currently, there is 70% of fishermen fishing [without permit], we need to acknowledge that”, states Oumar Ndiaye. Out of the 21,000 pirogues in the country, only a few hundred are registered and have a fishing permit.

Threatened by the World Bank, that said it would cancel its support to the fishing sector in case of failure to secure 100% of pirogues registration for the artisanal fishing permit by December 31st 2014, the fisheries administration, like in M’bour, launched an intensive operation during the last quarter of 2014.

On the eve of December 31st 2014, the number of fishing permits, for the first time since the instauration of the law, reached 5,823. Even if it was the first time such number of issued permits

had been reached, this was far from solving the issue. Given that the fishing permit is only valid for one year, as from January 1st 2015, things just went back to the starting point. For the administration, this is an endless quest – however, a new period of grace was granted by the World Bank...

FISH LANDING SITES: A SEGREGATION UNWORTHY OF THE 21ST CENTURY?

In Joal, M'bour, Hann, just to mention a few, the artisanal fishing landing sites are always divided into two zones: "Zone Afrique", where products are landed for local and regional markets, and "Zone Europe". "You will obviously see the difference", laughs Abdou Karim Sall, who took us to visit the Joal landing site: "In the Zone Afrique, fish is simply thrown on the ground". While in the Zone Europe, any fish that falls on the ground is discarded right away.

In the "Zone Afrique", the landing site is covered with mud; crowds are walking in all directions, making it difficult to find one's way. Such disorder never happens in the "Zone Europe", where the access is controlled, and the place regularly cleaned. To crown it all, this zone is equipped with a laboratory: Landed catches are controlled and then loaded straight into the refrigerated trucks and then to the packing plants. These products are exclusively destined to be exported to Europe. Between Zone Afrique and Zone Europe, there is only a thin, 20 cm thick, wall.

Beyond the challenge posed by the implementation of the artisanal fishing permit law, some even doubt the efficiency of this tool for regulating access to the marine resources. Applied without any restriction with regard to access to marine resources, the artisanal fishing permit is only an authorization to conduct the fishing activity. Such a system can only have little impact on preserving the resource.

The Directorate of Fisheries Protection and Surveillance (DPSP) seems overwhelmed by the challenges of managing artisanal fisheries: The use of nylon mono-filament, the fishing in forbidden areas; the fishing of juveniles, the refusal by many fishermen to wear a life jacket, etc. "It is up to us, fishermen, to take our responsibilities. You see, our decision makers, they have sent their children to study overseas in Europe, in Canada, in the States. If tomorrow there is no fish in our waters, it will be none of their business. We must keep that in mind", adds Abdou Karim Sall.

When it comes to the industrial fishing sector, both the Directorate of Marine Fisheries (DPM) and at the Directorate of the Fisheries Protection and Surveillance (DPSP) look happy: "The incursions in forbidden fishing zones are rare because we are monitoring the vessels with the VMS tracking system. Each industrial vessel having a permit in Senegal is compelled to have on board an ARGOS transmitter giving its position every hour. Once it gets into a forbidden fishing zone, we can see it automatically. If it happens to turn off its tracking system, we can also see it", explains Frigate Captain Malick Ndiaye.

However, many feel that the situation with industrial vessels under joint ventures is not that rosy.

JOINT VENTURES: THE GANGRENE?

The Senegalese flag is attributed to vessels of foreign origin, mostly trawlers from Asia and Europe, nationalized by means of joint ventures. A fishing joint venture is a company in which, normally, a majority of the shares are held by the local partner (at least 51%) with the remaining shares held by



Surveillance system.

foreigners. This formula enables the joint venture to enjoy Senegalese status, with the vessel carrying the Senegalese flag. A lack of transparency in the creation and operation of these joint ventures seems also characteristic.

For some years now, people have raised their voices to denounce the opacity in which these companies are set up and operate. “Nowadays, it is the national industrial fleet which is behind the fisheries problems. It is an organized plundering of the marine resources”, regrets Boubacar Kourouma, Deputy Secretary General of the National Fishing Observers Union in Senegal. “Most of our industrial fishing companies are just front companies for foreign operators; the only national thing they have is the Senegalese flag. Five or ten years ago, the people who are the front of these so-called national companies were small co-signatories agents, with meager salaries. How come that these same people are today heading fishing companies with ten boats, with billions of CFA francs”.

“All the fish production of these boats under joint ventures is exported to their countries of origin, and as such, they don’t contribute to the fight against food insecurity. This aspect is worrying. With diminishing stocks, the Senegalese artisanal fishermen are increasingly compelled to migrate to countries from the sub-region to look for fish”, explains Chérif Younouss Ndiaye, Vice President of APRAPAM.

The trawlers under joint ventures thus put more pressure on the resource, and contribute to the overexploitation of these resources. “People sometimes tell us that attacking these joint ventures will result in losing many jobs, because there are two thousand people depending on them. But nobody mentions the fact that the joint ventures are contributing to the destruction of our resources and when the fish will be gone, they will leave and the workers will lose their jobs. In Senegal, we have no diamond, no gold, we depend on marine resources for our livelihoods”, declares Abdou Karim Sall.

Another criticism often made about fishing joint ventures is the fact they do not embark observers on board. When they are on board, observers monitor many aspects of the activity: They oversee the compliance of fishing gears, whether the vessel respects the authorized area, the quantity and quality of the catches, the quantity of catches thrown overboard, etc. But, “since 1996, Senegal disembarked all observers from the Senegalese flagged vessels. Which is against the law”, notices Bassirou Diarra, Chief of the Inspection and Control Unit at DPSP.

“Are these industrials stronger than the Senegalese law?” we ask. “Sometimes they are strong, he!”, replies Bassirou. “First, they complained about the costs. We told them that the State would take charge of the costs. Now, as an excuse, they say they don’t have enough space on board as each observer takes up the place of a seaman. Simple fact is they don’t want these observers on board, and they are getting away with it”.

Being banned from embarking on local vessels, the observers are disappearing. They were 89 observers in 2003, and now, Senegal has only around 40 observers left. “I think that, within five years, the observers unit may disappear. The ones who are still around today will all be retired” warns Frigate Captain Malick Ndiaye.

Illegally exempted from having any observer on board, industrial vessels under joint ventures tend to do whatever they want once they are at sea. This offers them plenty of possibilities for cheating on catches declarations, and, particularly for trawlers, discarding a lot of their catches, never accounted for.

Boubacar Kourouma, from the Observers Trade Union, also accuses the industrial vessels of illegally cumulating fishing licenses. “Industrial fishing licenses in Senegal are of four types; we have A, B, C and D categories. Each of these categories is for access to a precise fishery. With the objective of preserving the resource, the Senegalese law forbids the accumulation, by a single vessel, of several licenses for different categories. For instance, a vessel with a license of category A, – Fish option-, should only catch fish, not shrimps or cephalopods. But these vessels under joint ventures tend to accumulate licenses, to be able to fish for many species, although this is forbidden by law”, he explains.

And when an industrial vessel is arrested, what happens? Not much, if we rely on what Boubacar Kourouma witnessed: “When vessels flying the flag of Senegal are arrested, they are almost exempted of sanction, so to speak, to save the jobs, people say. For the same infringement, – for instance, carrying on an activity non-compliant with its license category – , a foreign vessel will be fined 50 million CFA francs. While for a vessel flying the Senegalese flag, it is only 10 million CFA francs. Then, the company gives 500,000 CFA francs, and after some time, the matter is put to rest”, he says.

FOREIGN OWNED FISH PROCESSING UNITS: THREATS ON THE WOMEN FISH PROCESSORS

In parallel with the fishing joint ventures, we notice the spreading of foreign owned fish processing units, – for fresh and frozen products, or fishmeal – , next to the landing sites. Between 2011 and 2014, more than ten industrial processing units were installed by Chinese and Koreans operators in Kayar and M’bour. The products of these processing factories are exported to China, Korea and European Union countries. These factories are supplied by the artisanal fishing sector.

As a result, as they grow in number, these factories get into competition with the women fish processors for accessing fish. In a context marked by the decrease of fish catches, it is the women who are paying the highest price. More and more, they are struggling to get fish for processing and they see now their business getting to a standstill. These Chinese and Koreans operators, as we witnessed in Nianing, a village located on the Petite Côte, 8 km from M’bour, go down directly to the beaches to buy fish for their processing factories. By doing so, they violate the Senegalese law which stipulates that “A foreigner does not have the right to be a wholesaler, unless he goes through a Senegalese national recognized wholesaler who decides to sell him his products”, highlights Camille Jean-Pierre Manel, former Director of Marine Fisheries.

THIAROYE-SUR MER AND ITS GHOSTS

Once a prosperous locality, Thiaroye-sur-Mer, an old fishing village East of Dakar, is now a ghost of its former self. “Our processing activities are going to the dogs as a result of the lack of fish”, says plainly Mamboup War, woman fish processor, President of the Economic Interest Grouping (GIE) “Pentium Senegal” in Thiaroye-sur-Mer. “Both my husband and my son are fishermen and I am a fish processing woman. I can say that my whole family’s livelihood depends on fishing”. In the fishing village, hundreds of young people, unemployed and hoping for a better life, have given up fishing and illegally migrated to Europe. Hundreds of women fish processors have been waiting for their sons, brothers, husbands to come back – many years, without news: “My 28 years old son went from Nouakchott [Mauritania] to Spain on a boat. This was about six years ago, and we haven’t received any news since then. Before he went, I tried, in vain, to convince him to give up on the idea. I did everything possible to know his whereabouts, I even sent letters to the Senegalese Embassy in Spain, but still I have no news of my son”, confides Mamboup War.

“For our processing activities, we now have to rely on financing from the foreign traders coming from the sub-region, who then impose their purchase price for the processed products. They buy our processed product for 100 francs CFA a kilo, but once they get back home, this same fish is sold at 5,000 francs CFA”, explains Mamboup War. “It is very hard for us to witness that we work day in, day out, and night in, night out and then other people take away all the profits. And this is what we live through every single day”, she adds. She thinks increasingly about changing activities and selling second hand clothes, rather than processing fish. “We have become like steps of a ladder used by these foreign traders to make money on our backs, while we continue to live in poverty”, she says, disappointed.

But financial capacities of the fish processing women and the industrials are not to be compared: “These industrial operators can afford any fish they like, as they can propose double or triple the price than what the fish processing women can afford”, confirms Mamboup War, a fish processing woman in Thiaroye-sur-Mer, in the eastern part of Dakar: “Nowadays, when a pirogue lands its fish and we propose for example 100,000 francs CFA [€150] to get the fish, we have these industrials putting 1 million francs CFA [€1,500] on the table to grab the fish from the fishermen”.

This situation jeopardizes the contribution of artisanal fishing to food security, knowing the biggest part of the artisanal processed products is destined for the national and sub-regional market. “Now, there is a direct threat to the women fish processors; we must be more careful and develop management measures. Otherwise, we may see the disappearance of this artisanal fish processing activity”, acknowledges Camille Jean-Pierre Manel.

Fish processing women remember with nostalgia by-gone times when the resource used to be abundant and their activities thriving. “We had no problem accessing the resource to supply our processing. We were able to even help our husbands, for whom we used to buy pirogues and gears”, whispers Iphigénie Mbissine Sarr, President of the Artisanal Fish Processing Women Association in Nianing, a village located on the Petite Côte. Daba Tine, another fish processing woman, member of the Local Artisanal Fisheries Committee (CLPA) in Nianing adds: “Before, we could make a living; we ended a working day with 50,000 francs CFA [€75], and our men would come back home with at least 100,000 francs CFA [€150]”.

The general feeling is that it is urgent for the fisheries’ administration to propose concrete meas-

ures that will guarantee the fish processing women's access to the fish, as their work is indispensable for meeting the national and sub-regional consumers' needs of fish processed products.

RE-ANCHORING GOOD PRACTICES

During our journey, here and there, we however observed initiatives which bring about encouraging answers regarding fish resource preservation. The Protected Marine Area in Joal-Fadiouth is one of these initiatives that give hope. "I was born in Joal-Fadiouth. Thirty years ago we used to have a lot of fish in this area. Then we started witnessing that certain species were disappearing, and other species were decreasing", explains Abdou Karim Sall, Secretary General of the fishermen association in Joal-Fadiouth and President of the Joal-Fadiouth Marine Protected Area (MPA). The creation of an MPA, now managed by the local fishermen working in close collaboration with the administration, is bearing fruit. "We carried out a survey to see if there was any evolution today in the state of different resources. The results show that we have gone from 39 to 58 species of fish detected in the area between 2006 and 2008. In 2014, we counted 112 species. Species that we did not use to see in the area started showing up again. We noticed also a big improvement in terms of quantities", he continues. However, he regrets the lack of means devoted by the authorities to the initiative: "How can we ensure the surveillance of a Marine Protected Area, if there is no budget to pay for the fuel of the pirogue conducting the surveillance activities?", he wonders.

In Nianing, local fishermen have been observing, since 2004, a biological rest period on the octopus and molluscs fisheries: "We noticed that in some seasons, when we fished, we used to catch the small ones; we thought that this period was the best moment for a biological rest", explains Gilbert Sarr, fisherman in Nianing. Nowadays, between September 15th and October 15th, all fishermen stop fishing for octopus and molluscs. This bore fruit from the very first experience. "After the rest period, we got so much octopus and molluscs, and of such big size, that we decided to renew it every year. One single octopus can lay tens of thousands of eggs. A biological rest during this period can really help regenerate the resource", he adds.

On top of that, every year fishermen make pots out of clay mixed up with bits of shells. These, when laid down on the seabed, attract octopus to lay their eggs. Nowadays, this biological rest initiated by the fishermen has almost become institutionalized by the Senegalese state. However, "things are still not as they should be", regrets Gilbert Sarr: "We initiated this good practice – the State opens its eyes, but it still does nothing. For the case of octopus, following our studies, we agreed that biological rest should be from September 15 to October 15th. And it did work out well. But, last year, the State changed the date, just to make some other fishermen happy, as they did not accept the dates proposed by us, arguing that it coincides with the Tabaski feast (Aïd-el-Kébir) and the start of the new school year".

SMALL PELAGICS: EXCLUSIVITY ACCESS FOR ARTISANAL FISHING?

Amongst the stakes for the sustainable management of marine resources in Senegal, there is the thorny issue of the exploitation of the small pelagics. Many people have spoken out to request that the small pelagic fishery should be exclusively reserved to the Senegalese artisanal fishery which is very active in this segment and contributes greatly to food security. "In the 1970', boats were equipped with engines and seines, which is a fishing gear used to catch the small pelagics. Very good carpenters built pirogues able to carry 20 tonnes of fish", explains Dr Sogui Diouf, former

Director of Maritime Fisheries (DPM) in Senegal. “People of my age used to have breakfast, lunch and dinner with our parents. Now the families’ chiefs only provide lunch, generally composed of rice with sardinella. No sane person would want to sell access to sardinella to foreigners through fishing agreements”, he continues.

On the same topic, Abdou Karim Sall adds: “I take the example of Joal-Fadiouth where more than 150,000 tonnes of sardinella are landed every year, although the state declares that the overall catches must not go beyond 200,000 tonnes per year for the whole of Senegal. This means that there is an overexploitation of the sardinella even at the level of the artisanal fishing sector”. In his view, not only should the artisanal fishing sector be granted the exclusivity of access to the small pelagics, but also the fishing effort should be cut down to ensure the sustainability of the resource: “By doing so, we will also secure the women a permanent access to the resources for their processing activities”.

ALL UNITED AGAINST THE FISHING AUTHORIZATION ALLOCATED TO FOREIGN TRAWLERS FOR THE SMALL PELAGICS

These last years, the Senegalese artisanal fishing sector have made all that was possible to stop the issuing of fishing authorizations for small pelagics to foreign trawlers. These fishing authorizations were deemed illegal by the artisanal fishing sector. As provided in the law 98-32 of April 14th 1998, article 16: “Fishing vessels flying a foreign flag are authorized to operate in the waters under Senegalese jurisdiction, either in the framework of a fishing agreement between the State of Senegal and the concerned State or Organization representing this State, or when they are chartered by a physical or legal person with Senegalese nationality”. Following several years of mobilization, on March 25th 2012, the President of the Republic, then newly elected, decided to cancel the 29 fishing authorizations issued by the former government, mainly to Russian and eastern European trawlers. That was a huge victory for the Senegalese artisanal fishing sector. However, Russian operators are now coming back, through the purchase of a local processing plant, which will then charter Russian trawlers for catching small pelagics and other resources.

SHOULD THE ZONE RESERVED TO ARTISANAL FISHING BE EXTENDED?

To preserve and protect the access of artisanal fishers to the resources on which they depend, more and more voices are supporting the idea of extending the zone reserved to artisanal fishing, which has been set at 7 nautical miles for decades. Like Abdou Karim Sall, many fishermen think that the extension of this zone is now necessary: “If we really want to save the remaining resources, we need to review the seven nautical miles limit. For instance, in 1966, we used to be 6,618 people living in Joal-Fadiouth. In 1988, there were 18,000 people, and today we count more than 55,000 inhabitants. In 1966, we used to have less than twenty pirogues, in 1988 about a hundred and I don’t know how many today. So, we cannot apply the same limit we used to have 40 years ago. We need to review the texts and expand the limits of the zone reserved to the artisanal fishing”.

Boubacar Kourouma has some ideas as well on zoning: “From Saint-Louis to Yoff (Dakar), all the industrial demersal fishing boats should fish beyond 20 nautical miles. In the central area, where there is a strong concentration of artisanal fishing pirogues closer to the shore, they should keep out of the 12 nautical miles. And in the South, in Casamance, they should stay beyond 10 nautical miles”.

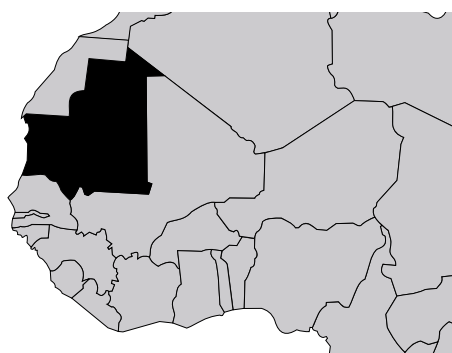
Pollution in the Hann Bay.



THE HANN BAY AND THE PLIGHT OF POLLUTION

From one extreme to the other. Considered in the 1960s as one of the most beautiful beaches in the world, after the Copacabana beach in Rio de Janeiro, the Hann Bay is now ranked amongst the most polluted in the world. "Because of the pollution, our bay has lost its luster and our beautiful beach no longer exists. Which hurts us a lot today", confides Ahmed Niang, coordinator of the Local Artisanal Fishing Council (CLPA) in the Hann-Bel-Air Commune. This pollution, which dates back from the 1980s, has been caused by the cargos and factories emptying their waste straight in the bay. That generated a hostile environment for fish resources, which are getting ever scarcer, for the great misfortune of the local fishermen. "In Hann-Bel-Air, we have 419 pirogues, all obliged now to go very far to fish. The pirogues you see there go up to Guinea-Bissau or to Sierra Leone hoping to find fish, with all the risks that the fishermen can find themselves confronted to at sea", explains Ahmed Niang, who encourages the State of Senegal to take up its responsibilities. "The waste water drain you can see up there, well, there are 17 of these drains pouring out waste in the Hann Bay. This is unacceptable, the State needs to live up to our expectations", he adds.

MAURITANIA



FISHERY INDUCED REVOLUTION?

Mauritania has the ambition to make the artisanal fishery one of the pillars of its development. But to achieve this, the country has to address a whole range of constraints such as lack of landing infrastructures, resources scarcity, social and economic benefits erosion within the artisanal fishing sector.

Despite its 750 km of coast teeming with fish, Mauritania only counts two fish landing infrastructures: The Nouakchott Fish Market and the Nouadhibou Artisanal and Coastal fishing port. This lack of infrastructure has for a long time been paving the way for a systematic looting of the marine resources by foreign vessels that ‘come, fish and go’.

FACING RESOURCES SCARCITY

“In the past, we used to fish just two or three kilometers away from the coast. Today, we have to go further at sea, and be away for four or five days. And when we come back, we have difficulties selling our products, because the buyers impose their prices”, says Ibrahima Sarr, President of the Southern section of the Artisanal Fishing Free Federation. “In the 1990’, we used to have so much sardinella. I would never have thought there would be a time when we would spend a full week without catching a single sardinella. For about three years now, there is a period of the year when we can spend two to three months without catching any sardinella in our nets”, he adds, his face overwhelmed with bitterness.

In the North of the country, in Nouadhibou, the situation is not much better: “Since last year, in Nouadhibou, we see a strong decrease in sardinella catches. This can be due to climate change, – this is what everyone says-, but it is also due to the overexploitation”, explains Abdoul Karim Diène, Secretary General of the Purse Seines cooperative. “From now on, all decisions must be made with regards to the preservation of the resources; we need to reduce the fishing effort of the industrial fishing fleet which has huge capacities and does not benefit local populations”.

A view shared by Mohamed Salem Louly, Technical Adviser to the Fisheries and Maritime Economy Minister. “In the artisanal fishing sector, fishermen provide for their families and the money they make, day in day out, goes to the local economy. The impacts are visible. Artisanal fishing provides a livelihood for many, including our most vulnerable citizens, and we are aware of that”,

he declares. “The rest of them”, he says, speaking of the industrial fishery, “they are foreigners who are coming and going; we can’t control them, even though we are trying to put safeguards”.

...CHANGE THE WAY FISHERIES ARE MANAGED

For some time, the Mauritanian authorities have declared new ambitions: “Mauritania supports any activity which will enable the African people, and in particular in the coastal countries, to be more aware of the importance of the fish resources, which are strategic for food security; to be more aware of the need to preserve and exploit them in a sustainable way”, declares Nani Ould Chrougha, Minister of Fisheries and Marine Economy.

Visibly, ambitions go beyond the Mauritanian borders. “The President of the Republic of Mauritania initiated a process to integrate the fisheries sector into the international initiative of transparency. This will mobilize stakeholders to put in place a transparency initiative in the fisheries sector”, explains the Minister. “Drawing from the experience of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), we will see how to develop an initiative for our renewable resources such as fish, timber or other. Mauritania is fully supportive of such initiative in the fishing sector. We have planned, in our strategy, a relatively important action in relation to this, which will focus on advocacy at both the African and the international level, in order for such initiative to see the light of day”.

In order to ensure the sustainability of the marine resources, the Mauritanian authorities have decided to change the fisheries management system. “So far, in Mauritania like in many countries, fisheries management was based on the fishing effort. As we are renewing our national fleet which was relatively obsolete, we realized we needed to change our fisheries management paradigm”, Nani Ould Chrougha points out.

This change, enshrined in the new fisheries development strategy for the period of 2015 – 2019,



Fish market in Nouadhibou.

THE FISHERIES INDUSTRY TRANSPARENCY INITIATIVE – FITI

The Fisheries Industry Transparency Initiative (FITI) was launched in the beginning of 2015. It is a multi-stakeholders initiative that is inspired, in its design, from the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI). The demand for the FITI has come from the Government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, who are funding Humboldt-Viadrina Governance Platform to design it and gather international support. The Humboldt-Viadrina governance platform, based in Germany, was founded by Professor Eigen, a member of Africa Progress Panel, and one of founders of the EITI. The launching ceremony of the FITI was held in Mauritania during a meeting co-organized by the government, and resulted into the Nouakchott's Declaration signed on 20th January 2015 by Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, President of the Republic of Mauritania, committing Mauritania to be the first country to implement the FITI Initiative. It should be noted that, in the latest Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement (SFP) protocol initialed with the EU in July 2015, Mauritania agrees to make public all agreements, public or private, allowing foreign fleets to get access to its EEZ.

FITI's first international advisory group, held in Berlin on the 24th of July 2015, brought together over 30 people, including representatives from Costa Rica, Indonesia, Mauritania, and the Seychelles, as well as representatives from Germany's Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ), the World Bank and the African Development Bank. Non-governmental organizations representatives included those from Europe's distant water fishing fleets and CAOPA from Africa, as well as a number of NGOs, such as Bread for the World, ICSF, Greenpeace, Oceana, WWF, CFFA. Unfortunately, no representatives from distant water fishing nation's governments, such as the EU, Russia, or China, attended this first meeting.

The FITI will establish an international Multi-Stakeholder Board with equal representation from governments, the fisheries sector and civil society. It will establish principles, transparency criteria and procedural guidelines – what information needs to be published and how. Multi-stakeholder committees in each implementing country will verify information published through FITI, which will be done on an annual basis.

If it is successful, the FITI could produce substantial credible information on fisheries, published every year as FITI reports. Deciding what information should be included in these reports was a key aim of the meeting – if transparency is important to support citizen's participation in order to improve fisheries policies, then what information needs to be included?

is at three levels: “First of all, the State will concentrate on its sovereign missions, namely the preservation of the resource and its sustainable exploitation. Secondly, we will be developing a transparent and equitable access mechanism. And thirdly, the rent generated from these resources, – which is the Mauritanian State patrimony, and belongs to the Mauritanian population-, be it coastal or inland, must be fairly shared”, details Nani Ould Chrougha. “This strategy's main objective is the development of the artisanal fishing sector and the improvement of working and living conditions. In our countries, we cannot put in place a reliable, sustainable and efficient strategy if we don't concentrate on the artisanal fishing sector”, adds his Technical Adviser, Mohamed Salem Louly.

Noble intentions indeed, and supported by a well-oiled discourse. Unfortunately, it contrasts sharply with the reality.

ARTISANAL FISHERMAN: A JOB WITH ERODING PROSPECTS

The Mauritanian artisanal fishing sector is currently characterized by a sharp deterioration of the social and economic situation of the artisanal fishermen. “The fishermen don’t have social protection, despite the high risks of their work”, explains Haroun Ismaël, Chairperson of the Mauritanian Artisanal Fishermen’s Committee.

Moreover, artisanal fishing in Mauritania scarcely feeds its man. “A large majority of fishermen live in poverty and their fate is in the hands of the fish buyers. Lots of money is generated in the fishery sector, but unfortunately it never trickles down to the fishermen”, regrets Ibrahima Sarr. “Sometimes, the little fish they bring back is not valued in the best way. More and more, fishermen are unable to cover the costs of their fishing trips”, adds Haroun Ismaël.

This is a situation that pushes many away from the sea. “We have boats, but no crew to go and fish on them. Even the Senegalese [present in Mauritania] who are more experienced at fishing than us, no longer find crews. Many of them have migrated. Mauritians who had gone into fishing now prefer working in mines or engage in agriculture. We have a serious problem of labor force in the sector”, confides Sid Ahmed Abeid, President of the National Fishing Federation – Artisanal section (FNP).



A fish landing site in Nouakchott.

AT FAULT, THE MARKETING MONOPOLY?

Many blame the lack of prospects in the sector on the low income fishers get from fishing; a situation worsened by the system of marketing fish exports through the Mauritanian Fish Trading Company (Société Mauritanienne de Commercialisation du Poisson – SMCP). The SMCP, created in 1984, has the exclusive rights for the marketing of fish products to be exported to foreign countries – fishermen have to go through the SMCP to sell their fish. “It is a system that reassures a bit the fishermen in the sense that SMCP takes away from them the burden of marketing the catches. But is this company, SMCP, fully playing its role? I doubt it. The SMCP should be the only company marketing fish, but that is only in theory. In practice, there are people looking for customers abroad, and the SMCP comes at the end to validate the trade arrangements entered in by these people. These are people who have a certain influence in the sector, and who are representing private fish products collecting companies”, explains Haroun Ismaël, President of the Mauritanian Artisanal Fishermen’s Committee.

The shortcomings of this monopoly system affect the artisanal fishermen, who have very few chances to make their activity profitable. First of all, there is the fact that the SMCP is in no way involved in the production chain: The role of this public company, of which the Mauritanian state holds 70% of shares, is solely to market fishermen products without sharing any of the production risks – whether fish is sold or not, and at what price, doesn’t affect its existence.

A second shortcoming is related to the setting of fish prices. The SMCP sets the prices on its own, without any consultation with the fishermen. And the fishermen have to accept the prices set by SMCP. Worst of all, this company doesn’t even respect the prices it has itself decided: “Nowadays, we no longer trust the SMCP, because more and more, it announces prices for our fish which in the end, it doesn’t respect. Before, when the SMCP was announcing a price, we considered it official and we all knew that this was the price that would be paid for our fish; this would be our income. But today, it gives prices, and later on, lowers them. Recently, we had to stop fishing for commercial reasons. Why? Because the SMCP announced a price it would sell our fish, but the Japanese buyers said it was too high and rejected it. What the SMCP did then was simply to lower the prices offered to the Japanese. Something we then ourselves rejected, and we stopped fishing. After a month, the SMCP was compelled to increase the price a little. All of this negatively affected the credibility of this company”, says Haroun Ismael.

What is also deplored by many is the lack of efforts by the SMCP to promote Mauritanian fish products. For decades, the company has been negotiating fish prices with the same Japanese buyers. This generates a dependency vis-à-vis these buyers and hampers the possibilities for the company to negotiate better prices on behalf of the fishermen. “If you look at the statistics, you will notice that buyers are always the same: 17 companies, all Japanese, such as Mitsubishi. These companies don’t want to pay the prices asked by SMCP for our fish. And as we only sell fish to these companies, they dictate what they want. Fishermen, in any case, are the losers”, explains Haroun Ismael.

Another bone of contention is the fact that foreign fleets catches are exempted from this obligation to go through the SMCP for marketing, even those fleets subjected to the obligation of landing their catches in Mauritania. For instance, the catches of the Chinese company Poly Hondone Pelagic Fishery do not go through SMCP. An exemption which is enshrined in article 8 of the Convention signed between Mauritania and Poly Hondone, which gives the company “Freedom of exporting all its products following the circuits of its choice, as well as the freedom of setting prices and apply its own trading policy”. “We deplore this, we are up against it. This situation reduces even further the efficiency of the SMCP”, points out Haroun Ismael.

The Chinese have more powerful fishing gears, enabling them to scoop up the resources. Thanks to their low production costs, and the tax exemptions they enjoy in Mauritania, they can also afford selling their products at prices lower than what SMCP is asking for. It's plainly unfair competition. "The State of Mauritania has given this company two guns to shoot the local fishermen with. The first gun is the access to the fish and the second one is at the level of the marketing", concludes Haroun Ismael.

But how comes that PolyHondone Pelagic Fishery company got such a favorable treatment?

THE CHINESE TREATED LIKE KINGS IN MAURITANIA

Chinese fishing companies are thriving in Mauritania. These companies know how to take advantage of the weaknesses of the country to be granted considerable advantages, tax cuts and other forms of exemptions. As compensation, they promise to create infrastructure and generate jobs.

"The government's idea is very important, namely to create basic infrastructures in Mauritania. We fully support that idea. And I think the Chinese succeeded in making very tempting promises related to that", analyzes Haroun Ismael. "Mostly, there were two kinds of agreements proposed. On the one hand, there was an agreement proposed with the European Union which pays a compensation for their fleets having direct access to our fish. They come to take the fish and bring it back to their countries. On the other hand, there were the promises of the Chinese agreement model, which consisted in setting up companies in Mauritania, generating jobs and creating infrastructures. In order to encourage the Chinese to invest in the creation of infrastructures, the State gave them exemptions and derogations", he continued.

Chinese fishing companies are famous in Mauritania, compared to the European fleets. "The French started fishing in Mauritania in 1952. They left Mauritania without building any port, any landing site. Thank God, at least the Chinese have the goodwill, they erected the Port de l'Amitié (Port of Friendship), and they funded other infrastructures", welcomes Abdel Kan Md Mr, the chairperson of the FNP South section. "Today, with the Chinese, we have got nearly 120 boats making up our national fleet. The Chinese have also set up many joint ventures with people from Mauritania. Anyway, in terms of fisheries, the Chinese are the first partners of Mauritania". Chinese companies are also active in the fishmeal processing activities. But on this topic, the Mauritanian fishing stakeholders seem rather embarrassed.

Chinese fish meal factory in Nouadhibou.



THE SPREADING OF THE FISHMEAL FACTORIES

In Nouadhibou only, we count more than twenty fishmeal and fish oil processing factories. Many of these companies are from Morocco, where they were facing a shortage of raw material to ensure a regular production. This situation raises concerns among the fishermen. Twenty factories, this is far too much for Sid Ahmed Abeid, president of the FNP Artisanal fishing section. He wants this number to be cut down to two factories. “We had asked to have two factories, one in Nouadhibou and another in Nouakchott, in order to receive the waste from the artisanal fish products. It is by so doing that we will develop. When we have these two factories in place, when we have landing infrastructures on the whole coast, when all of this is in place, it will be a revolution in Mauritania. And we will no longer need foreign boats. Everybody will be able get a job in the Mauritanian sector”.

Despite this somewhat bleak picture, Mauritania Artisanal Fishermen did achieve success, victories that they are proud of and celebrate. This is the case of the National Octopus Feast, which has been celebrated on July 26th for the last three years.

“HANDS OFF MY OCTOPUS”

This is the most important day for many Mauritanian artisanal fishermen. On July 26th 2012, Mauritania signed a fishing agreement with the European Union which stopped EU fleets from accessing octopus, thereby recognizing that octopus was solely for national Mauritanian fishermen, particularly artisanal. For the artisanal fishermen, this has been the happiest outcome of many years of struggle, and they decided to celebrate on that very day, each year, the National Octopus Feast.

“We request from the State that all that can be fished by the artisanal fishermen should be left for them. That’s why we asked the octopus to be exclusively reserved to artisanal fishermen. The surplus of resources, that we are not able to exploit, we don’t want to stop the state from getting profit out of it”, explains Sid Ahmed Abeid.

Jealously protecting their octopus, fishermen are not planning to stop there. “We are also discussing about the lobster; we are pledging for these species to be also exclusively reserved for the Mauritanian coastal and artisanal fishing fleets. And this on good track”, adds Sid Ahmed Abeid.

“Our third struggle will be for the small pelagics. We need to develop infrastructure, and build capacities. Today in Nouadhibou, we don’t have fishermen targeting small pelagics. We have them in Nouakchott, but not in Nouadhibou”, regrets Sid Ahmed Abeid. “The pelagic fishery has a huge potential. Once the artisanal fishermen will be able to fish the quantities of small pelagics available, then we will request the State to also keep this resource for the artisanal fishers”. In the meantime, an annual agreement with Senegal still grant each year 400 fishing permits for Senegalese pirogues to come and catch small pelagics in Mauritanian waters.

“What we also raised, as an issue, is the necessity to keep the industrial vessels away from the coast, outside of the 20meters depth zone, and reserve this coastal area for the artisanal fishing. The more we keep trawlers away from the coastal area, the better we preserve our resource, and the better we can exploit it ourselves sustainably. That is what we have proposed in relation with the new government strategy”, continues Sid’Ahmed Abeid.

MANAGE THE FISHING EFFORT TO CUT DOWN ON THE WASTE

Artisanal fishers have many demands to their government, but they are also taking initiatives to address tricky challenges.

At times when the catches are huge, but when there is a lack of buyers, fish gets wasted. That was the situation for years in Mauritania. “Before 1998, we only used to have the local market for the small pelagic. It was a very limited market and, at times, the catches were huge. There was much waste. We always had tons of unsold fish thrown away”, remembers Djibril Diabaté, member of the FNP South Section.

The fishermen decided to react and set up a Committee on fishing effort management in 1998. “The Committee’s role was to regulate the market to ensure that the production meets only the market needs”, explains Djibril Diabaté. “Fishermen had to split into three groups; each group would go fishing one day out of three. And in case the demand increases, we would make two groups. It was both a way of preserving the resources and valuing our catches”, he adds.

This initiative requested and implemented by the fishermen themselves, helped to revive the pelagic production market. “At the beginning, the administration thought that this system was only so that we were able to sell fish at higher prices. Fortunately, the administration has now realized that the effect was also to organize the fishermen for fishing responsibly”, confides Abdoul Karim Diène, one of the fishermen who took this initiative.

In the long run, the Committee on fishing effort management became the purse seines cooperative. “It is the organizational system that changed, but the objective remains unchanged. The priority for selling catches is always given to the local market consumption, and then to the frozen products market. Selling for fishmeal comes as a last resort, when we have no longer any alternative for the catches”, explains Djibril Diabaté.

PARTICIPATIVE SURVEILLANCE

Managing fishing effort is not the only initiative that has been taken by fishermen over the years. Supporting their administration to fight illegal fishing activities is another one.

“Illegal fishing is something that makes all countries, like Guinea, Senegal, and Mauritania, lose money. To be able to fight against illegal fishing, we need to join efforts between the countries”, declares Mohamedhine Fall, The Fisheries Minister’s technical adviser.

Sid Ahmed Abeid is convinced that participative surveillance is one of the key actions to help fight against illegal fishing. “But for the participative surveillance to be efficient, fishermen need to be properly involved. I will share with you an experience that we had some years back”, he said before launching into a long story.

“We used to have so many trawlers incursions into our artisanal fishing zones. Every time we went to see the governor to complain about this, the navy people would say that is was not true, that there were no incursions from the trawlers.

These incursions were so devastating that, one day, the Governor called me and asked me what I wanted to be done. I said: It is very simple. I am going to take my fishing boat and you give me two sailors. I will take them on board. So, with the Gendarmerie commanding officer and the navy operations chief, we got three fishing boats ready, very discreetly.

The operation was kick-started at midnight. The three little boats went to three different areas. And we witnessed so many trawlers in the artisanal fishing zones. Can you imagine, the mooring rope of the boat in which the navy chief stood was pulled by a trawler, fishing illegally in our zone, and the little boat was dragged on a long distance.

And the little boat nearly went over. People were very afraid. The commanding officer had to cut off the mooring rope to escape. When we came back in the evening around 5 PM, we had caught

THE OCTOPUS ARTISANAL FISHERY: AN EPIC OF HOPE

“My name is Sid’Ahmed Abeid. I have been a fisherman for more than thirty five years. In those days, artisanal fisheries in Mauritania comprised only the Imraguen traditional fishing communities fishing for mullet, and the wolof Mauritanian fishermen from the Ndiago region. Then the octopus fishery developed around Nouadhibou.

I can tell you about it, because in 1978, I was the first artisanal fisherman who started fishing for octopus.

I remember it well, we were only 17 artisanal boats in Nouadhibou, catching a few fish, like dogfish, – which at home we call *tollo* – but we were only selling our products for 7 ouguyas, -2 eurocents - per kilo. In 1978, some people from the Japanese cooperation came to see me and told me that it was possible to catch octopus with pots, and that this would give a very high quality product that we could sell to them at a very good price. So, I decided to give it a go. I tried all kinds of materials to make my pots: Cement, PVC, cans – but nothing proved ideal. Pots would break; they were too fragile or too heavy.

Then one day, I went to Las Palmas, and I found that the Spanish were selling water in bottles of five liters that were just the right size for my pots. I went to see the people at the bottle factory, and I bought 4000 bottles from them. They adapted them to make pots for me, and I sent them to Mauritania. Results were excellent! And as this happened just after the great drought of 1973, many Mauritians who had migrated to the coast began to catch octopus with pots, like me. A few years later, in 1984, when the SMCP – the Mauritanian society for the marketing of fishery products – was created, we were the first ones to supply them with our products!

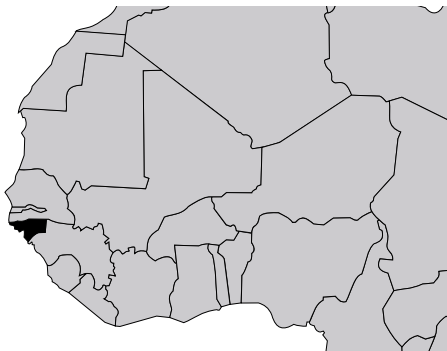
Today, we are more than 35,000 fishers and we have a fleet of 7,500 artisanal boats. And when seen in terms of the overall octopus catches, we, the artisanal octopus fishermen provide 60% of the national production in quantity and 70% in value. We provide 90% of the employment in the fishing sector, with people working in 50 freezing plants, in 12 boat building workshops, in hundreds of stores for the sale of equipment, for fish selling, transporting, etc. The added value of the artisanal fisheries sector is 8 times greater than for the industrial fisheries sector.

In addition, I need to tell you that fishing with pots is a selective fishing method: The octopus hides in the bottom of the pot, and we take it out by hand. If it is too small, we put it back, alive, in the sea. In any case, as we put quality first, small juvenile octopuses are of no interest to us. Secondly, in recent years several measures have been taken towards improving sustainability: We now implement biological rest periods of 4 months a year; we have put in place a minimum weight for octopus catches, of 500 grams gutted, etc.

What I'm telling you about here is what I call development, environmental, social and economic sustainable development. And for this reason, we want to have exclusive access to the octopus resource”.

twenty trawlers. The governor realized that the fishermen were telling the truth. It was from that moment that we started participating to surveillance operations. When needed, we just make some boats available, the governor provides the fuel and we take on board two fishermen and two sailors from the navy and they go and check the zone reserved to artisanal fishing. Each time, they catch at least three to four trawlers”.

GUINEA-BISSAU



PEACE HAS RETURNED, BUT NOT THE FISH!

Guinea-Bissau's coastal waters are among the richest in fish resources of the West African coast. However, Bissau Guineans have themselves little access to this fish, as they face many constraints: Weak infrastructures, poor performance of a neglected artisanal fishing sector, systematic looting of fish resources by vessels of foreign origin, failure of governance, in particular control and monitoring of fishing activities.

Shaken by deep successive political crisis, Guinea-Bissau is, since June 2014, on the road to stability, with a new elected president, who has renewed ambitions for his country. At the fish market of Bissau's artisanal fishing port, fishermen and women fishmongers can't hide their joy to be able to carry on with their activity in all tranquility. "I am very happy with your visit and I count on you to convey our greetings to the world", says Ignasia Da Silva, President of Bissau Fishmongers Association. Her Vice President, Lydia Da Costa, proudly adds: "This is the largest fish market in Guinea-Bissau. There are about 500 women working here".

Thirty meters away, there is a shed. This is where women proceed with retail sales. The place is strikingly clean. But, alas, there is not enough room for all the women. Others have found a place outside where, braving the ban from the administration, they spread their products on the ground. No choice: They have to sell for their family's sake.

Most of the women arrive at the market between four and five every morning. When the first fisherman comes back, the competition amongst the women starts, every day tougher, to have access to decreasing quantities of fish: "Some years ago, a fisherman would take the ice, go to sea, and after forty five minutes, he would be back with a lot of fish. Nowadays, they go to sea for the whole day and they do not bring much fish back", reflects Lydia Da Costa.

A CHANGE IN THREE STEPS

Isabelle Igana is the oldest of the fishmongers: "I was here before anyone else. All these women here, I saw them engage in fish trade. Now I am 76 years old", she proudly announces. "When I

started, I was 25 years old. This market for selling fish did not exist. Initially, the fishermen went to sea and returned at regular hours. We could predict the time of their return, so we knew also at what time we should come here, take the fish, sell it straight away and then immediately return to our homes”, she explains.

In her memories, that was the belle époque, when fish resources were plentiful and women could both engage in fish trade and be present at home for their families, for their children. “Then the war came. People lost their purchasing power. Fishermen abandoned the fishing. We started to encounter difficulties to get the fish and even the little that we got, we couldn’t sell it”, continues Isabelle Igana. “Finally, peace returned to the country. But there is no more fish”, she says under the approving eyes of dozens of women surrounding us.

Now that fish is scarce, women are forced to spend the whole day at the market, awaiting the return of the fishermen. But, with men at sea, women all day at the fish market, what becomes of the children? “All the suffering we endure here, it is so that our children can go to school and have a brighter future. We have not had the chance to go to school ourselves, but we do everything so that our children can go”, says Isabelle Igana evasively.

THE BREAKDOWN OF THE COLD CHAIN

In Guinea-Bissau, shortages of fish are recurrent. In most restaurants of the capital, if you want to eat fish, you have to order it in advance. “We are the ones supplying these domestic markets”, says Lydia da Costa. “It’s increasingly difficult to do so because there is not enough fish. As it is us, the women, who support our families, there are even some among us who are heads of households. We



Women fishmongers at the fish market of Bissau's artisanal fishing port.

put the food on the table, we pay for health care and education of our children. When there is no fish, it affects directly our living conditions”, she continues.

One of the major constraints is the breakdown of the cold chain, explains Ignasia Da Silva: “There is no cold room where we can store our fish. The lack of ice affects not only women fish-mongers but also fishers”.

At Bissau’s fish market, there is a small ice production unit. “We produce approximately 500 kg of ice per day, although the daily needs are estimated at 12 tons of ice”, explains Mario Vaz, the head of the ice unit production, “to get ice, women come in turn and only two women per day can get ice here, and then, they have to wait for their next turn. Meanwhile, others try to find ice in town. There are a few private ice production units”.

According to him, the lack of ice also largely explains the inability of artisanal fishers to meet the demand of Guinea-Bissau market for fish and other sea products. “Due to the lack of ice, fishers cannot travel long distances. Barely a few hours spent at sea, and they are forced to turn back to avoid losing their first catches because of the heat”, says Mario Vaz.

The lack of ice also accentuates post-harvest losses. This is a major concern for the Government, according to Gualdino Afonso Ty, Director of Artisanal Fisheries. “Post-harvest losses are a huge problem in fishery resource management. We should pay much more attention to women involved in the processing and marketing of fish”.

FISHERIES STATISTICS UNDERESTIMATE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ARTISANAL FISHING SECTOR

Fishing holds an important place in the economy of Guinea-Bissau. It contributes 25% to the State budget and employs thousands of Bissau Guineans. The sector is dominated by artisanal fisheries which plays a crucial role in the food security of populations. “At least 70% of fish products consumed locally come from artisanal fisheries. The products of industrial fishing are mostly for export”, said Gualdino Afonso Ty, former Director of Artisanal Fisheries, now the Director of Training, Fisheries Development and Maritime Economy.

But in reality, the country has very few reliable statistics on the artisanal fisheries sector. “According to a study we made, there are more than 3,000 fishermen in Guinea-Bissau. Among them there is a large number of foreign fishermen from Senegal, the Republic of Guinea, Mali, etc. There are also many people who practice subsistence fishing and do not feel the need to register as fishermen”, he adds.

According to the same study, Guinea-Bissau counts 1,495 boats. “The number is underestimated”, says Gualdino Afonso Ty. “I think that this does not reflect the reality, there are many more boats. However, having these data is important because they give us an idea of how much vessels exist at the level of our country”. However, such approximative data mainly highlight the inability of the country to have reliable statistics on which to base its actions and policies towards artisanal fisheries.

ARTISANAL FISHERIES MARGINALIZED

José Maria Miranda Tavaré is a fisherman native of the island of Bubaque, in the archipelago of Bijagós in Guinea-Bissau. Nowadays, he has migrated to Bissau. “In Bubaque, there is currently no ice production unit. This has pushed many fishermen from the island to Bissau. They fish and sell

on-site because, here, at least, they can find some ice. But the population of Bubaque, an island, lacks fish! ”, he says. “In Bubaque, we don’t have any landing infrastructure; we don’t have a fish market. When we land our fish, it’s just spread out on the ground and that is where women come to buy small quantities to sell”, he says, adding bitterly: “We have no help, no support. Any difficulty we encounter, we have to face it all by ourselves. Whether the engine of a fisherman’s boat is down, or whether he has lost his net, we try to find a solution amongst ourselves, in solidarity”. He evokes also the impossibility of finding fishing gears in local shops, forcing the fishermen to go to neighboring countries like Senegal to buy the necessary equipment. That increases the costs.

Abdoulaye Leni is a member of the National Association of Artisanal Fishing Boat owners (ANAPA). In his view, the first of the difficulties faced by artisanal fishers in Guinea-Bissau is related to the multiplicity of taxes they have to pay to be able to go to sea. “First, there is the artisanal fishing permit which costs 205,000 CFA / year [€313]. For navigation, we pay 5,000 FCFA [€8]. In addition to this, for each fishing trip, we pay 1,000 FCFA [€1.5] as harbor cost. A 60 kg bag of ice costs 3,000 FCFA [€4.57]. For the fuel, a liter of gasoline costs 750 FCFA [€1.15]. So much money we have to spend before even going at sea. And when we return, for each landing, we have to pay 2,000 FCFA [€3] to the veterinarian”, says the young fisherman.

At the Artisanal Fisheries Directorate, Gualdino Afonso Ty argues that efforts have been made to relieve local fishermen. “The fishing permit did cost much more than that – there was a 30% reduction”, he says.

Indeed, for fishing permits, Guinea-Bissau regulation provides for a dual pricing, one for national fishermen and one for foreign fishermen, who are present in great number in the country. “The cost of the fishing permit depends on the power of the boat. For a boat with no engine, the annual cost is less than 30,000 FCFA [€45.7]. For a boat with a 40 HP engine, the fishing permit costs around 200,000 FCFA [€300] for nationals and 600,000 [€915] for foreigners”, clarifies Gualdino Afonso Ty.

This double pricing system, also applied to industrial fleets, fuels the “nationalization” of foreign boats wanting to pay the tariff for domestic fishermen. “If this continues, the fishing effort will increase constantly”, he says, adding: “We have also a fisheries agreement with Senegal which result in about 300 Senegalese flagged boats coming to fish in our waters. It is easy for us to control these vessels that arrive here under this fisheries agreement. But there are many others which bypass this agreement and this is more difficult for us to control”.

FACED WITH THE SCOURGE OF ILLEGAL FISHING

Despite their rickety equipment, many artisanal fishermen are forced to go further and further offshore in order to find fish. Areas reserved for artisanal fishing are being regularly invaded by large trawlers, showing very little concern about the preservation of the marine environment.

In November 2014, in a single week [17–23 November], eight trawlers, – six Chinese and two with a Senegalese flag – , were caught fishing in the area reserved to Guinea-Bissau artisanal fishers. Such illegal fishing operations have increased since the coup of April 2012, which destroyed the already limited country’s capacity to monitor activities in its waters. Russian, Chinese or Koreans industrial trawlers, joined by an increasing number of vessels of foreign origin flying Senegalese flag, consider Guinea-Bissau waters as a lawless area and do whatever they want.

The new government, installed since June 2014, vowed to resume control over the exploitation of fish resources and to make fisheries one of the pillars of the development of Guinea-Bissau. The

Government is working to strengthen legislation and systems for monitoring and controlling fishing activities, in particular through cooperation with Senegal Directorate of Fisheries Protection and Surveillance (DPSF). For example, the DPSF organizes training for Guinea-Bissau surveillance staff. From time to time, a Senegalese patrol vessel contributes to surveillance operations in the waters of Guinea-Bissau, as part of this bilateral cooperation. But these actions remain limited and largely ineffective against illicit fishing operations that have had years to establish themselves in Guinea-Bissau's waters.

EU – GUINEA-BISSAU FISHERIES AGREEMENT: SCORNE SUSTAINABILITY

November 24, 2014: The European Union renews, without any further negotiations, its fishing agreement protocol with Guinea-Bissau, on the basis of a text negotiated in 2012. The previous text was suspended following the outbreak of the political crisis in the country.

This renewal is presented as a way to bring a little hope in the country and to combat the systematic plundering of its territorial waters. “The reactivation of our agreement would be a good basis to be able to support the efforts of that country to put things in order, especially at the level of the control. It is also highly likely that IUU vessels that operate in Senegal come from the South, from Guinea-Bissau. We are prepared to help Guinea-Bissau to strengthen surveillance in its waters”, explains Roberto Cesari, from the European Commission Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries.

The EU-Guinea-Bissau agreement allows 40 European vessels to fish in Bissau Exclusive Economic Zone. The amount of the compensation that will be paid to Guinea-Bissau by the European Union is estimated to around six billion CFA francs (about €9,2 million) annually for three years. Of this amount, nearly two billion (€3 million) are intended for the development of the fisheries sector, particularly for the training of fishermen, the control and monitoring of fishing activities, the improvement of sanitary control and the support for artisanal fisheries, including ice production plants.

However, the reactivation of the fishing agreement protocol raises concerns. Based on fisheries data that were used to negotiate the 2012 text, this new protocol does not take into account the fact that since 2012, more Asian vessels have started to fish in the waters of Guinea-Bissau. For example, in June 2014, four Chinese ships of the Shihai company began to fish in Guinea-Bissau waters under a charter agreement. There is also a fishing agreement signed between Guinea-Bissau and Russia in 2013, which terms were never made public.

In an investigation report entitled “African fisheries, a lost paradise?”, published in May 2015, Greenpeace revealed that vessels of Chinese origin fishing in Guinea-Bissau have systematically and largely under-reported their tonnage, and therefore their fishing capacity. More recently, Mario Lopez da Rosa, who was the Minister of Fisheries in 2012 and thus negotiated with the EU, has been put under judicial investigation in his country for having issued fraudulent fishing licenses.

These various elements suggest there is little guarantee that, in Guinea-Bissau, there exists a framework ensuring that the total fishing capacity is in line with available resources. “From our point of view, the Protocol does not integrate the advances of the European Common Fisheries Policy reform, particularly in terms of ensuring EU vessels only access the surplus of resources that cannot be caught locally, based on the best available scientific data. Ideally, a scientific campaign should have been done before talking about access. It was not”, regrets Béatrice Gorez, Co-ordinator of the Brussels-based Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFA).

“A serious assessment of the status of the stocks would take two to three years”, responds

Stefaan Depypere, Director for International Affairs and Markets at the General Directorate for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE) of the European Commission. Obviously, neither the European Union nor the Government of Guinea-Bissau wanted to wait that long...

“The Portuguese and Spanish governments have also done everything to speed things up and bring back their fleets in the waters of Guinea-Bissau as soon as possible, especially given the closure of Mauritanian waters for the Spanish cephalopod trawlers fleets”, explains Béatrice Gorez.

For its part, Stefaan Depypere speaks of a “realistic albeit not optimal choice”. The renewal of this agreement protocol is, according to him, a way for the EU to give the new Government a chance: “It was the best way to make financial resources available to the country to restart”, he said. “Whether this was optimal, I would say no. This is a realistic position which was taken and we hope that operators will give this a chance to work”.

CHINA TO SUPPLY THE DOMESTIC MARKET?

At the same time, Guinea-Bissau Government is also attempting to use the presence of Chinese vessels to supply the country with fish. In the absence of a national industrial fleet and with the inability of the overlooked coastal fishing to satisfy the local demand in fish, the Guinea-Bissau Government allowed, in 2014, four ships of the Chinese company Shihai to fish in the waters of Guinea-Bissau to supply the domestic market with fish. A license was granted to these four ships.

But facts collected from the women fishmongers raise doubts about Guinea-Bissau Government’s choice: “The Chinese vessels give us rubbish. Each time they land here, it is the waste, the leftovers from fish they sorted on board. We even found snakes in cartons of fish that they landed here”, says Adama Djalo, President of the Guinea-Bissau National Network of Women in Fisheries. “This isn’t really the right solution. Instead, we want good agreements that will allow us to take advantage of our resources, to have good fish for ourselves”, she adds.



Artisanal fishers in Cachau.



*International Women's Day
celebrations in Bissau.*

For Adama Djalo, the Government must instead work to reinforce the national artisanal fisheries sector. “Because it is artisanal fisheries that lands good fish for the country – industrial fishing vessels rarely land fish. They do it only when they have a bit of surplus or when it is fish of little value, it is this type of fish that they give us”, she says. “These boats fish in our waters, the good fish is sold elsewhere and we just get the scraps, the less good quality fish that they cannot sell otherwise”, continues Adama Djalo.

GUINEA-BISSAU PROUD OF ITS WOMEN

March 8, 2015, International Women's Day. Women in Artisanal Fisheries stormed the Fisherman's House in Bissau fishing port. The Fisherman's House is a hall of 50 meters length and 30 meters width, where fishermen come when they are back from the sea, to repair their nets, to tell stories, to talk about incidents, to rest, before returning to the water. But that Sunday, 8th March, the place was not for men. More than a thousand women came, to celebrate the International “Women in Fisheries” Day – their day–in the presence of Guinea-Bissau Prime Minister, the Minister for the Maritime Economy, the Defense Minister, and their guests, – women in fisheries from Benin, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Mauritania, Senegal and Togo.

This event, initiated by the CAOPA, was an opportunity to recognize the critical role of women in the socio-economic reconstruction of Guinea-Bissau. Domingos Simões Perreire, then Prime Minister, said: “Women are emerging as a major force in the world. In Guinea-Bissau they contribute, decisively, so that this force grows”. To continue its reconstruction and its path to economic independence, Guinea-Bissau needs its women, believes Domingos Simões Perreire. “Today, we need the women forces more than ever, because we want to change our attitude to chart a new future for our youth, honoring our past, together with women who in the 1960s, fought on the same footing as men for our independence”, he continues, “but to get there, we must first fight against inequalities and violence against women”.

CONFLICT AROUND MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

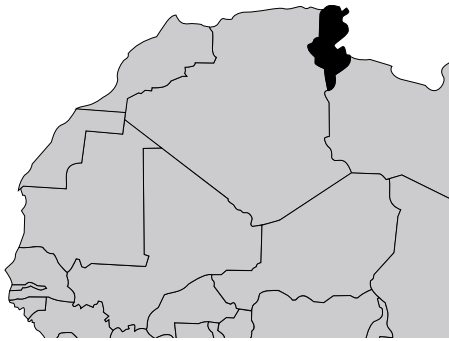
In Guinea-Bissau, complaints from artisanal fishers about Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are numerous. Abdoulaye Leni is a fisherman, member of the National Association of Artisanal Fisheries Shipowners bureau (ANAPA). “Marine protected areas are an issue for all fishermen in Guinea-Bissau. They cause problems because they are not well demarcated”, he says. He continues: “Because of the lack of markers, fishermen do not know where the limit of the marine protected area is. There are fishermen who are arrested for simply crossing this invisible limit. Controllers confiscate all of our equipment: Pirogue, engine, net, etc. And the fine is very heavy, between 500,000 (€762) and 700,000 CFA (€1067). The fisher must pay the money to the IBAP bank account before getting his equipment back.

IBAP is the Institute for Biodiversity and Protected Areas. Created by Guinea-Bissau Government, IBAP's mission is to contribute to the preservation of biodiversity and ecosystems in the country. IBAP is in charge of existing MPAs' management. The Institute also has the responsibility for creating new protected areas. “For me, a marine protected area is a zone that allows the fish to reproduce. But fish are not breeding all year round. So there should be a time when the area is closed, so that the fish can reproduce, and a time where it must be opened up to fishermen”, declares José Maria Miranda Tavarès, a fisherman, bitterly.

In addition to the absence of markers to show the limits of the MPA, fishermen also denounce a trend towards “communitarisation” caused by the way access to the resource in marine protected areas is managed. “The fishers who live around the Marine Protected Area are allowed to fish there, but for other fishermen who regularly pay their fishing licenses, fishing remain prohibited in these areas, at all times”, says Aboudalye Leni. He fears that such situation may lead to conflicts between fishing communities.

Jean Pierre Benoit is a program officer at the IUCN office in Guinea-Bissau. “IUCN has always had close links with IBAP and works with this organization on protected areas”, he says. He assures that, to his knowledge, everything is going well. “The goal is a rational and sustainable use of resources by fishermen. We work with the administration and the fishermen to implement appropriate management measures. We also work to enforce fishing rules which have been co-decided with the administration and fishermen. The involvement of fishermen in the establishment of the fishing rules is fundamental for us”, he argues.

TUNISIA



ARTISANAL FISHERIES IN SEARCH OF ITS SPRING

In Tunisia, men and women from the artisanal fishing sector are still fighting for survival. Lack of recognition, lack of support, negative impacts of trawling, bad weather conditions, low level of organization, strong competition from uncontrolled eco-tourism and recreational fishing: Difficulties are legion. The Tunisian artisanal fishing sector has yet to see its spring coming.

The aftermath of the initial burst of freedom, so called the Tunisian revolution, which further started the Arab Spring, has produced ambivalent effects in the fishing sector. All along a coast of more than 3,000 km, from Ghar El Melh to Ghannouch, going through Sid Mechreg, Ajim, Zarzis and Zarrat, artisanal fishers experience problems that grew worse after the revolution and the subsequent loss of control in the sector. “Everything people did not dare to do before, after the revolution, they did”, says Khalifa, our driver and guide. He is a nostalgic of the Ben Ali era when, according to him, there was at least order and discipline. Angry, but cautious, he says no more.

Our visit starts at the fisheries training center of Ghar El Melh, a coastal town located North-West of Tunisia, about 50 km from Tunis. On arrival, we are greeted by the Director of the center and his team. They prefer to speak of “coastal fisheries” rather than “artisanal fisheries”, a term which, in their eyes, epitomizes everything that is archaic, medieval. “In Tunisia, the attention towards artisanal fisheries is mainly concentrated on coastal fisheries. And when we talk about coastal fishing, we talk about a sector that is equipped with navigation instruments and other technology”, says an adviser to the Director of the centre. He also makes us understand that the fishing sector is fully under control. “In Tunisia, we have an average annual production of 80,000 tons, with a record of 104,000 tons, of which 50% are pelagic fish. All fish catches made in Tunisia are for local consumption”, he says. Needless to add: Everything is perfect in Tunisia fisheries sector.

But, very quickly, we will realize it is not.

After leaving the training centre, our steps lead us to the Ghar El Melh lagoon. There, fishermen face not only bad weather on a daily basis and the silting of the lagoon, but also the displacement of their fishing site by eco-tourism projects. Around two hundred canoes fish in the lagoon,

providing livelihoods for about 500 families, insists a fisherman. “We don’t have extreme poverty here. This is thanks to the lagoon. The day the lagoon will be gone, I don’t know what we will all become”, he adds. Because of the bad weather conditions, particularly bitter northern winds, fishermen can only go out to sea between 60 to 80 days of the year. “Fishermen are forced to become farmers, some also work in the building sector”, says Ahmed Abbour, from the Association for Ecological Development and Cultural Rapprochement.

GREEDY INTERMEDIARIES SPELL MISERY FOR FISHING FAMILIES

As in Ghar el Melh, artisanal fishermen in Sidi Mechreg are hanging on by their fingernails. In this town, there is no electricity, no running water and no telephone coverage. Only fishing families stay there, trying to survive as best as they can. Harsh weather conditions only allow them to fish for around 90 days a year. Fishermen have to go through greedy intermediaries who impose their purchase price. “The buyers sometimes simulate a failure of the ice maker to oblige fishermen to sell their product at half price, as, without ice, our fish would quickly lose its quality”, explains Tawfik Abbassi, a fisherman. Helpless, local fishermen also face competition from recreational fishermen, “the Sunday fishers”. With modern boats and ultra-sophisticated diving gears, some recreational fishermen catch several hundred kilos of fish per day, although the legislation allows them to fish only 5 kg. These catches are sold to restaurants in Tunis, delighted to have fresh high quality products. In Sidi Michreg, local fishermen demand a reinforcement of the regulations applying to recreational fishermen and a greater control of their activities at sea.

ANTI-TRAWLING FISHERMEN

In the South of Tunisia lies the Gulf of Gabes. We visit Ajim, on the island of Djerba. The Fisheries Development Group Ajim Djerba (GDPA) leads a bitter fight against trawling. It has done so since



its inception in 2006. “It’s a group of fishermen which has 103 members including 80 women clam harvesters. There are two women who are members of the Board of Directors”, says Lamine Samia, the administrative and financial assistant of the group. The president of the group, Juili Walid, explains that one of the group’s flagship actions has been to fight the thriving trawling activities by building and immersing 380 artificial reefs of 200 kilos each on the coasts of Ajim. To do this, the group benefited from the support of the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

But these 200 kg artificial reefs do not seem heavy enough to stop some trawlers, which are even able to move the reefs and then fish as if nothing happened. “The group has now another project with UNDP consisting of building and immersing 350 artificial reefs of 1,000 kilos each”, explains Juili Walid. For several months, the group is collecting fish from its members to constitute a fund for the building of these concrete reefs.

Juili Walid explains: “Each fisherman gives one fish per day in order to make artificial reefs. With the sale of this fish, we have been able to collect already 16,000 dinars [€7,318]”. However, their efforts are not supported by the State. They regret especially that the National Guard, supposed to monitor activities at sea, does not do its job properly. “Not long ago, there was a demonstration against the National Guard because it doesn’t play its role, which is to prevent trawling in our zone”, says Juili Walid. “We went out with our fishing boats and we caught a trawler in the act and left it with the National Guard. But after two months, they let it go”, he continues with regret. “With the sudden political change, anarchic fishing has increased. Boats are trawling in waters of less than 20 meters of depth. From the coast, we can see the 10 meters depth zone, and vessels are trawling there under the nose of the administration. The National Guard does not react. Even the army caught some of the trawlers, but the trawlers’ owners play an arm twisting game with the administration and win”, explains Nawfel Hadad, from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. “One day, a trawler was arrested at sea. Twenty to thirty other trawlers came and closed the entrance to Gades commercial port in protest. They did a ‘sit-in’ at sea, no merchant vessel could enter the port. Finally, that forced the administration to release the trawler”, he concludes.

FISHERMEN ACTIONS BEAR FRUIT

The actions of fishermen are not in vain. “There are fish species that had disappeared for a long time and now, they are beginning to come back”, reflects Sedghiani Abdul Razak, Secretary of the Fisheries Development Group of Djerba Ajim. If the fight against trawling has been at the origin of the group’s creation, nowadays it multiplies initiatives to further support its members. The group owns an ice production unit, which primarily supplies its members. It also has a scheme that allows members to obtain micro-credits repayable interest-free. This enables fishermen to purchase their boat and outboard engine. Women clam harvesters are not forgotten. “Clam season is limited. It lasts only from October 15 to May 15, and the rest of the year, women remain without work. The group gives them micro-credits to start small enterprises, for particularly agriculture and sheep-rearing”, explains Lamine Samia. The grouping also raises awareness among fishermen so that they will be more respectful of the resources.

EL BIBANE LAGOON IS SHORT OF BREATH

On the island of Djerba, on the shores of the El Bibane lagoon, we are greeted by Mohamed Souei, 37-years old, who introduces himself as being “passionate about the sea”. He is the manager of the

company 'Eco Eco'. Following a national call for tender, Eco Eco won in 2013 the contract for the exploitation of El Bibane lagoon for a period of fifteen years. "You are welcome. This is the South of Tunisia, in the peninsula of Zarsis. The El Bibane Lagoon is a 27,000 ha seawater lagoon where an ancient type of fishing is practiced: The bordigue fishing. We have the longest bordigue of the Mediterranean", he says.

The bordigue is a dam built with wooden panels and wire netting where the lagoon and the sea communicate. The panels are installed in a 'V' shape, with fish capture rooms at the end. Small fish enter the lagoon through the holes in the wire netting. They feed in the lagoon and grow. When they become large enough to swim upstream, they get trapped in the capture rooms from where they are removed with nets. "We leave the fish to move freely. Fish is not obliged to enter. Those who enter are caught, but others return to the lagoon for breeding, and to continue their growth", explains Mohamed Souei. He adds: "We have a two-month biological rest period. In February and March, we stop fishing. We also practice other fishing techniques, such as hook and line. We have high quality fish. There are 150 fishermen who have a permit to fish in the lagoon with small rowing or sailing boats. Motorized boats are prohibited in the lagoon".

Fishermen have the obligation to sell their catches to the 'Eco Eco' company, which has a processing unit on-site. During the weekends, people from the town come on the spot to stock up on fish. All the fish caught in the lagoon is sold and consumed locally. "We find almost all noble fish species of the Mediterranean here, except the pelagic fish, cuttlefish and mussels. We have the most beautiful bream of all the Mediterranean, the large sea breams", says Mohamed Souei proudly. "Our work is seasonal. We have the bream fishing season. It is the main season, in November and December", he adds.

El Bibane lagoon is seemingly calm and the water is translucent, which let us see all what it contains. From the boat that takes us on a tour of the lagoon, our eyes riveted on the water, we observe, enchanted, fish sneaking in the middle of aquatic vegetation. Just like in an aquarium. But even in these quiet waters, problems are swarming. "Resources are beginning to decline because of illegal fishing", confides Mohamed Souei, whose calmness contrasts with the frustration. "The culprits? I'm not one of them, so I don't know", he says, before continuing hesitantly: "It is actually fishermen, yes, fishermen. There are also people who are not fishermen, like trawler owners, businessmen and all that. It is a mindset and it is an overall environment which creates this".

Faced with this situation which seems to completely escape his control, Mohamed Souei wishes to further develop the touristic potential of the area. He has started the renovation of a hotel-restaurant on a small island located in the middle of the lagoon.

POLLUTION SUFFOCATES GANNOUCH

In Gannouch, artisanal fishermen also fight against trawling. They have united in the Fisheries Development Group Gannouch, created in 2009 and which has 237 members. "We have two problems here: The pollution and illegal fishing", explains Sassi Alaya, the President of the group. An industrial zone is next to the beach. A chemical plant using phosphorus has been in business there since 1974. Currently, it is said that it dumps about 15 tons of waste per day at sea. From the beach, we can see thick layers of white fumes rising towards the sky. "Because of the pollution, we have to change our nets at least 3 times a year. This factory is the greatest enemy of all the fishermen and all the fish", says Sassi Alaya. "On the bottom of the sea, all seagrass beds are dead, while a few years ago there was seagrass reaching 8 meters height", says another fisherman. "For the State, the industrial zone is



more important than the fishermen”, he adds. This situation affects fish resources: “Cuttlefish cannot find a place to lay their eggs. In their search, the only things they find are bits of fishing nets”, explains the president, showing a picture to prove it. To restore a suitable environment allowing cuttlefish, – which is one of their major fishing resources – , to lay their eggs, the fishermen of Gannouch, supported by Japanese experts, had the idea of setting palm branches on the sea bottom.

Because of this pollution, the fishermen also had to move their landing site to about 17 km outside of the city, where they have to abandon their boat without any supervision.

Like in Ajim, fishermen have also built artificial reefs to counter trawling. “Fishermen contributed to fund the building and the launching of these reefs at sea. Everyone contributed 50 dinars [€23]. There are people who have no money. They sold their wives jewelry to contribute like the others”, explains the president of the group. With this fund, they were able to make six artificial reefs of one ton each. But, like in Ajim, some trawlers are able to move these artificial reefs out of their way and fishermen are now considering building reefs of three tons.

These initiatives produce interesting impacts for the fishermen. “Before the artificial reefs, we were catching smaller cuttlefish. Now, both quantities and weight have increased. There is an improvement around the artificial reef. We want to increase the number of reefs so that fish, cuttlefish and shrimps find a good place to live”, concludes the president of group.

WOMEN CLAM COLLECTORS AT THE MERCY OF INTERMEDIARIES

In Zarrat, a coastal town south East of Tunisia, at 30 kilometers of Gabes, the women clam collectors are at the mercy of intermediaries imposing low prices. The clam is a valuable kind of shellfish essentially destined for export, mainly to Spain and Italy. Bought from the women at prices between 3.5 (€1.5), and 4.5 dinars (€2), a kilo of clam is, within 48 hours, sold to a price 10 to 15 times higher at the European market.

At the beginning of this activity, in the 1970s, the price of a kilo of clams paid to the women was

three to four times more, at around 12 dinars (€5.4). This drastic fall in the price is mainly due to the proliferation of intermediaries. According to Zaabi Mosbah, President of the group for the operation and development of clam collection, these “profiteers” have proliferated after the advent of the revolution. “As a consequence of the revolution, there was a change in the entire sector. This is primarily due to the lack of control”, he says. While in 2010 this group consisted of 3,000 to 4,000 women clam collectors, today only 72 are left. Discouraged by the fall of the purchase price, many women clam collectors left the group, which was unable to guarantee them remunerative prices.

Harvesting clams is an activity practiced mostly by rural women, living in precarious conditions. At low tide, wearing rubber boots, women scatter over several kilometers of beaches. Every day, between five o’clock in the morning and 3 o’clock in the afternoon, under a blazing sun, they travel long distances, their back bent, sinking up to their knees in the sandy mud. Their only tools: A toothed iron rod of approximately 20 cm long, known locally as El Menjel, and a small plastic container in which they put the clams. The technique of clam fishing is to locate the clam thanks to the two small holes in the sand caused by the two clam’s siphons. Women then drive the iron rod down the hole and eject the animal. It’s a painstaking job, and only the most experienced women can fish two to three kilos of clams per day, earning between 12 and 15 dinars (between €5 and €7).

Poverty stricken, with no support whatsoever, and with their sole livelihood being the harvesting and sale of clams, women faces a number of constraints that accentuate their vulnerability. One of the major hurdles is the recurrent closure of clam fisheries zones, either for sanitary reasons or to limit exploitation of the resource. On average, the clam fisheries are open only 70 days of the year. Most of them illiterate, women clam collectors also lack appropriate training and coaching to develop alternative revenue-generating activities.

Finally, these women heavily depend on often unscrupulous intermediaries. “The clam fishing zones are far away from where women live. Under these circumstances, the transport of women is provided by the intermediary himself. If a woman refuses to sell him her clams at the price he proposes, he will then refuses to take her in his truck”, explains Zaabi Mosbah.

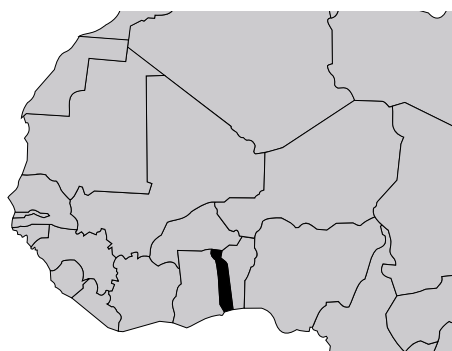
Women clam collectors in Zarrat.



Women clam collectors have no other possibility to sell their products; they have to go through these intermediaries who are mostly designated representatives of export centers located in Sfax, more than 200 km of Zarrat. Under these conditions, regardless of how derisory the price offered to them is, the women are forced to sell. For them, it is a question of survival. “The day I work, I eat. If I do not work, I do not eat. It’s as simple as that”, says Zeyna who has been collecting clams for 36 years. “I have been doing this job for so long that I can’t do anything else. I carry on especially for my children, although even those who have studied are not working. What I want is for my children to find a job to help me”, she adds.

An impoverished population, Tunisian women clam collectors all dream of better and fairer prices for their products, which would give them a life in dignity.

TOGO



ARTISANAL FISHERS IN DISTRESS

In Togo, fishing is almost exclusively an artisanal activity. However, the sector lacks recognition and support by the authorities. Stakeholders feel neglected and much less supported than farmers.

The fishing quay in the port of Lomé looks like a high containment area. It is barely a 45 meters wide pocket handkerchief, where hundreds of pirogues are crammed. Next to it, the fish market where no less than a thousand women operate on a daily basis. Here, fishermen, women fishmongers, vendors and buyers, walk on each other. The same pains, the same complaints, day after day.

Three years ago, the Togolese Government decided and completed, without consultation with stakeholders, the enlargement of the Lomé Autonomous Port, which mainly hosts containers of second hand cars from Belgium, Germany, Spain and Italy. This space, of 450 meters long, was previously dedicated to artisanal fisheries activities.

Infuriated by this situation, and by unkept promises of building a new fishing port, the fishermen and women have a strong grievance against a Government which they feel is not listening to them, and does not take into account their concerns. Nobody tells them anything, they say. Most fishermen and women working at the fishing port of Lomé don't even know who is the Director of Fisheries, although it is the same person who has been occupying this position since the creation of this directorate in 2012.

A LITANY OF CONSTRAINTS

It is Friday afternoon, October 30, 2015, and we are holding a meeting with the artisanal fishing stakeholders in the fishing port of Lomé. The Director of Fisheries and Aquaculture, Dr. Christian Domtani Ali, has been invited. He confirmed his presence just a few hours before the meeting, but, finally, he does not come. We tried to reach him by phone, in vain. "We were sure that he was not going to come. These people never put a foot here", says a voice in the crowd.

Behind the weary looks and the stony faces, there is deep anger. Women let off steam first and

recite a long string of constraints. “You can see by yourselves how our space is so limited with the building of the Autonomous Port third dock. It has eaten up a big part of the fishing port. Our pirogues are stuck to each other, and this is causing enormous damage. Waves destroy our pirogues as they collide with each other. You can also see the poor conditions in this place, there is no hygiene”, says Benissa Alberta, a woman fishmonger. The cleaning of the fishing port is entrusted by the State to a private contractor. But for several weeks now, the gutters have been clogged and the evacuation of waste water is impossible; it stagnates on the concrete. The stench is unbearable.

Next to take the floor is Vero Avoulete, also a woman fishmonger. She deplores especially the high cost of fishing inputs in Togo. “Nets are so very expensive, fuel as well. Outboard engines, we almost can’t find any. There is only one company that sells engines in Togo. This makes the price very high. We are obliged to turn to financial institutions to ask for credit. But because of the poor sales of fish, we are constantly indebted. Meanwhile, all the State programs are devoted to agriculture. Fishing is completely neglected in Togo”, hammers the fishmonger, visibly angry.

Evi Koffi, a fisherman, denounces the reduction of fishing zones due to the proliferation of commercial vessels. “Before, there were not so many boats at sea. Nowadays, these big vessels are so numerous that it prevents us from going fishing in some of our places. We are told that we shouldn’t cause insecurity for these vessels. Our fishing area has shrunk tremendously”, he explains. His pirogue was destroyed after a collision with one of these commercial vessels. “It’s been 6 six months that my pirogue was damaged, and, ever since, I have not been able to work. There is no one I can speak to for solving my problem”.

Standing in the crowd, very quiet, Ahoedo Kossi, Head of the Section for the Promotion of Fisheries at the Fisheries and Aquaculture Directorate, recognizes that the situation of the fishing



*Crowded port
of Lomé.*

port poses a serious problem. “But we haven’t remained idle. The Government has requested the support of the Japanese cooperation to build a new fishing port. It will be at about one kilometer from here. It will be much better equipped than the former port. We are now at the stage of the feasibility study for the project. What we are asking is for them to wait, to be patient. We cannot do otherwise”, he tells us. He adds that he counts on us to convey the message to the fishermen.

Emmanuel Gkapo, a hook and line fisherman and owner of seven pirogues, asks us to transmit his complaint to his country’s authorities: “The announced construction of the new port must materialize quickly, for our safety, for the safety of our pirogues and for improving our activities”. Approaching us in this way reflects the level of desperation of artisanal fishers, the lack of trust and dialogue with the administration, but also the lack of confidence among fishermen towards their organizations leaders.

ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY ARTISANAL FISHERIES?

Fishermen say that sometimes, at sea, they meet foreign vessels, Chinese they think, fishing in Togolese waters. We raised the issue with Mr Ahoedo Kossi, Head of the Section for the Promotion of Fisheries at the Fisheries and Aquaculture Directorate.

Fishermen say that sometimes at sea they meet foreign vessels fishing in Togolese waters. Do you confirm this information?

Industrial fishing is almost non-existent in Togo. Currently, we have delivered a fishing license to one fishing trawler which is not Togolese although it belongs to a company that has a Togolese status. But what I know is that there is no way to monitor the entire area. Sometimes, the Navy undertakes control operations at sea. The navy controls if the owner has a valid license from Togo. The fact is there is only one company that has one a Togolese fishing license.

You do not believe fishermen testimonies?

Fishermen dramatize sometimes. What I know is that sometimes industrial vessels damage their nets and destroy their equipment. I can’t believe them 100% because today there is a tracking system for the whole coast. But it is no far reaching, so from time to time, there are cases like that, that fishermen should report. But fishermen, well, sometimes they don’t even know where the Togolese fishing zone stops. Incidents often take place in Benin, or in Ghana. Fishermen get the wrong impression. When they are at sea, they don’t have a system for monitoring their geographical location, that’s annoying. I know that in Benin there are licenses issued to Chinese fishing vessels. I think it is the same in Ghana. Otherwise in Togo, except the single vessel I told you about, since 2010, we stopped issuing licenses for the simple reason that we don’t have the means to control the whole zone.

WEAK ORGANIZATION

Next to us, some fishermen organizations leaders are bothered to see women express themselves. “These women are going to spoil it all”, argues one of them who does not understand why women are allowed to speak at all. “We have already explained them everything yesterday, so why come back to that again”, he adds. Indeed, the day before, we engaged in a conversation with fishermen organizations representatives at the headquarters of the UNICOPEMA (Union of Maritime Fisher-

ies Cooperatives). It is the biggest of the five fishing cooperatives and unions identified. Established in 1978, the UNICOOPEMA is so far the only one to have official recognition.

For nearly three hours, we discussed artisanal fisheries in Togo with ten representatives of fishermen organizations present at the meeting. Who distinguished themselves by their contradictions and squabbling.

Adam Derman, presenting himself as the “first leader of the national fishermen union, and also representing the fishing community at the level of the Togolese Government” denounces the individualism that reigns among fishermen. “Although it has existed for a long time, our activity remains an individual activity. Like today, when we are all giving our own views about everything despite the organizations we created. We have difficulties organizing ourselves”, he emphasizes.

In 2012, the creation, within the Department of Agriculture, of a Directorate for Fisheries, raised a lot of hopes, particularly for supporting better organization of the stakeholders. “We hoped that this Directorate would be working alongside us to help us find solutions to our problems. We also hoped for a greater recognition of the fishing sector by the State. But alas, stakeholders are not associated to any of the initiatives that affect the sector. We are the people living from fishing; can you understand that there is a relocation of the fishing port in the absence of any consultation with us?”

“At the level of the State, frankly, we have no support, I’m telling you”, adds Adam Derman. A statement that Amétepè Ameji, Secretary of the UNICOOPEMA, refutes. “This is not true to say that the State does not help us. The Directorate for Fisheries is still in its infancy. It was created only in 2012 and it is about to develop its activities”. As evidence of the State support, Amétepè Ameji mentions the subsidy on fuel. “In the city, a liter of fuel costs 595 FCFA (€0.9), here it is sold to the fishermen at 550 FCFA (€0.84). This is already good for us”, he argues.

For its part, Folly Folligan Bébé, Coordinator of the Port of Lomé fishermen, points the finger at harmful fishing practices, such as the use, by some fishermen, of mosquito nets as fishing nets. But he notices some improvements thanks to awareness raising. “We tell the fishermen that if they take small fish, in 2 or 3 years, there will be no more fish in the sea, and they are now beginning to understand”, he says. But a bad practice is replaced by another one. “Meanwhile, people have learned another technique that came from Ghana, called fire fishing. This has really caused much trouble here. People go to sea with power generators and project light to attract fish and catch them”, explains the coordinator, disheartened.

Tegba Toï is the Assistant Secretary General of the Togolese Coordination of Peasant Organizations and Agricultural Producers (CTOP). He explains that his organization has committed to help fishermen solve their problems. “In the framework of the PASA project [agricultural sector support project] funded by the European Union, we supported the fishermen, more especially fish farmers”, he says.

FISH FARMING TO OFFSET DECLINING CATCHES?

In Togo, the annual fish production is evaluated at approximately 24,000 tons per year. However, the needs in fish are estimated to exceed 60,000 tonnes. Despite the increase of the number of fishermen, catches are stagnating. Staggering coastal erosion and bad weather make artisanal fishing activities more difficult. In recent years, the Government of Togo has resolutely opted to promote fish farming in order to meet local markets needs demand for fish. Fish farming developers can benefit from multiple types of support, ranging from training to the provision of fingerlings and subsidized fishfood.

A WOMAN FISHMONGER SWITCHES TO FISH FARMING

Ablawa Apoin Togbeu was a fishmonger for several years at the fishing port of Lomé. Now she is switching to fish farming. “Before, I owned a pirogue that went to sea. But it is too much anxiety for nothing. I had a lot of losses. Now I get fish supply from a white man who sells me his fish”, she explains. Her supplier is a European who acquired the Togolese nationality through marriage, and operates a 15 meters long boat.

In 2011, she also decided to engage in fish farming. Mrs Togbeu built the fish farm “la canne à pêche” in her native village, Sevagan, a town about 30 kilometers from Lomé.

Mrs Togbeu never received any formal training in fish farming and therefore, she learned along the way, by trials and errors. With a tractor, she dug four ponds on her farm, which costed her about 5 million FCFA (€7,500). “I took a loan that I pay bit by bit – today I have not yet finished reimbursing it”, she says.

The beginning was not easy for Mrs Togbeu. She explains: “After digging the ponds, the next question was: Where could I find the fish? I brought fish from the Lake, but it did not work. Also, I didn’t know you need to feed the fish, so they kept dying. And, whenever I was putting new fish in the water, villagers came at night to empty the pond. When I was coming to catch the fish, I couldn’t find anything”. At that time, she decided to hire a keeper. She recruited Koffi Tchiè. He lives permanently on the farm with his wife and his three year old child. “I am the guardian, night and day. I feed the fish three times per day and I also make the feed for the fish. My role is also to ensure that no one comes to take the fish from the ponds”, he explains.



Ablawa Apoin Togbeu.

In 2014, Mrs Togbeu participated to a training. During this session, she discovered the project for support to the agricultural sector (PASA), and, through that project, learned how to feed the fish. “PASA also gave me the fish fry. I put 2,000 [fry] in a pond. So, last year, I could fill two ponds but the other two remained empty because I didn’t find the fry”.

Mrs Togbeu also benefited from the PASA for getting subsidized fish food. She buys a bag of 20 kg of pellets at 5,000 FCFA (€7 EUR). On the market, the same bag is three times more expensive.

Mrs. Togbeu sells her fish to women fish smokers. She also sells her fish to hotels and restaurants in Lomé. «For women who come to buy on the spot here, I sell a kilo of fish 1,500 FCFA(€2.3). But for hotels in Lomé, I sell a kilo up to 2,500 FCFA (€3.8)”.

Fish farming is not easy. “Everything is difficult. Feeding the fish three times per day is not easy. Finding the ingredients for the feed is not easy. Making the feed is not easy. But where there is a will, there is a way”, she says. Yet, she sees a brighter future in fish farming and thus aims to expand her farm. “My goal is to redesign my ponds and dig other ponds to produce fry myself”, she confides.

OBSOLETE FISHING SYSTEMS?

In the village of Kodjoviokopè, located 10 kilometers from the fishing port of Lomé, we meet the Chief Nathuy Mensah and Atika Kuunmi, the “sea leader” of the locality. “My role as sea leader is to maintain order when the canoes head to sea, to prevent any difficulty that can occur out there. I then do everything to resolve these difficulties. And before they go to sea, I make sure that they take all necessary precautions to avoid problems”, explains Atika Kuunmi. “To be sea leader, you must collect the largest number of votes. But the basic requirement is to be a fisherman and to have a fishing net”.

Here, fishermen are united in the Fishermen Union of Kodjoviokopè (UPK). An organization without official recognition and which has no connection with the other groups of fishermen in Togo. Here, fishermen mainly fish with beach seine. The beach seine is a large net with a central pocket. The beach seine technique consists of taking a net from the shore with a pirogue, rounding a school of fish before coming back to shore. Then, from the beach, about 20 men and women pull the net out of the water, while singing. The task is visibly arduous. After pulling the net out of the water for more than an hour, catches are meagre. Just a few kilos of fish, of different species and sizes. Catches are immediately divided into two similar piles. The first pile belongs to the owner of the net and the second pile to the fishermen. “Nowadays, the work is very difficult. Sometimes, after a day of work, fishermen return home empty handed. Before, there was so much fish in the sea. Currently, we notice a decrease. This situation is unprecedented. People who engage in this activity suffer enormously”, reflects Atika Kuunmi.

For Chief Nathuy Mensah, it is high time that fishermen abandon the practice of the beach seine. “As leaders of this village, we met with the authorities. We made proposals that we want to change this obsolete fishing technique and replace it with two or three fishing boats, to supply fish to the



Fishermen in Kpémé.



Pollution in Kpémé.

whole of Togo, from Lomé to Sinkansé. But there has been no follow up on these proposals”, he says.

He points the finger at the divisions among the fishermen, which weakens them further. “If there had been some union amongst ourselves, the fishermen, they would have listened to us. But if I’m alone to go to see the Government, hoping to be listened to, it will never work. The Government showed it was willing to help us. On our side, we should be talking with one voice”, he concludes.

FISHERMEN AGAINST INDUSTRIAL POLLUTION

At Kpémé, located 35 kilometers from Lomé, we meet around 30 fishermen and women fish processors. In this locality, fishermen feel the full force of industrial pollution. The accused: A phosphate processing plant. It rejects waste waters from the washing and rinsing of phosphate directly in the sea, through a 500 meters long channel. From the eroded beach, we observe the spectacle with awe. The sea takes here an abnormally yellowish color. “Before, when we were going to sea, we found fish close by. But these days, with the waste from the phosphate, fish have gone far away. We do not have the money to buy an engine, so we use paddles in our pirogues to reach the fishing zone”, confides Koffi Kossi, president of the local fishermen group. According to the fishermen, this situation pushed many of their friends to migrate to other countries like Gabon, Congo, Guinea and, Nigeria.

“When fishing is good, everyone is happy, but lately things are difficult because the fish is scarce. So the fish we buy is more expensive, and when we sell it, it’s difficult to make benefits. We hope someone will help us. In addition to this, measures have to be taken so that the sea can produce more fish”, adds Amemado Povi, a local woman fish processor. Da Silveira Bébé, another woman fish processor, adds: “The phosphate creates poverty and famine for us. Apart from fish processing, we haven’t learned a profession that will provide us with some money”.

To increase their chance to be heard, local fishermen are organized in a group supported by the Christian Federation of Togo Artisanal Fishermen (FCPAT). A federation whose existence we previously ignored. Toffa Mensan is its president. He also holds a grudge against the Togolese administration in charge of fisheries. “For four years, a Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries has been appointed. We have never seen him here. We don’t even know him. Whenever we send our demands to our authorities, they say that Togolese have never been into fishing, that the fishermen

we represent are not Togolese. This is not true. There are communities in Togo which have always been fishing. But the authorities refuse to recognize them”.

Everywhere, Togolese artisanal fishing stakeholders have the same complaints against the administration. They pay the high price for their division, which weakens them further, and make them unable to address increasing challenges. “Our plea is to ensure that the State and our administration work closely with us and that we are involved in the decision-making concerning our sector”, says Adam Derman, from the National Fishermen Union. There is still a long way to go.

JEANNE AMEMATSRO, A FISH PROCESSING CHAMPION

The last rays of sunlight are slowly fading in Katenga, a fishing village a few hundred meters from the fishing port of Lomé. But, for Jeanne Amematsro, the day is far from over. After two days of absence due to illness, Mrs Amematsro tries to catch up with her fish processing. Aided by a fifteen years old girl and a young man in his twenties, she places smoked fish in baskets. In a few weeks, these baskets will reach inland localities of Togo but also of Benin to be sold.

Mrs Amematsro is the President of the Women Fish Processors Union. She has worked as a fish processor for many years: We buy the fish from the women fishmongers working at the fishing port. Carriers bring the fish on the processing site. Once we receive the fish, we spread it on the racks and leave it in the sun for some time. Afterwards, we put it over the fire. We lay the racks one on top of the other and we rotate the order over time. We pay attention to the color, so it is nice to look at”.

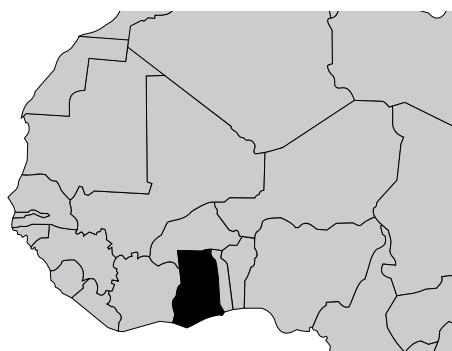
Jeanne Amematsro uses wet coconut skin to give the smoked fish its golden color, which is highly appreciated by the customers. She has a particular profit-making strategy. When the fish is abundant, especially between September and November, she stores the smoked fish, to be sold in a period where the fish is scarce. “From December onwards, the winds of Harmattan start blowing. Many fishermen move elsewhere. At that time, we get no more fish to process. So what I have already processed and stored, that’s what I sell in January and February. The price is more interesting on the market as there is not enough fish to meet the demand”, she explains.

“Over the year, there are three months when we have easy access to fish. If this period passes and you have not been able to buy fish from the fishermen, you will have nothing to sell for the rest of the year”, explains Mohamed Fati, Member of the Women Fish Processors Union. “Those who have the money to buy while the fish is available to process, store and sell later, those are the ones making profits”, she adds.

The experience of Jeanne Amematsro attracted the attention of Amegnyglo Selom, a young student who now works with her. “I am currently training to prepare my dissertation for becoming an agronomist. I have done almost two months here. Initially, I came just to make my investigations and thought it would last about a week. But I got really hooked by that work, so I jumped in. So I help her, and I do my writing as well”.

The student has learned a lot during his internship with Mrs Amematsro: “I saw that the work is difficult, but also profitable. I started to negotiate to see if I can stay with her, to be her trade agent. I would like to study the market to see where we can best sell our processed products.”

GHANA



ARTISANAL FISHING IN NEED OF MANAGEMENT

Before going to Ghana, we didn't know many people in the artisanal fisheries sector, nor the context in which they operate. It was a great adventure, marked by several ups and downs. The first challenge arises when to establish a contact. It's seemingly difficult to establish contact with people working in artisanal fisheries in Ghana. This fact can largely be explained by the lack of an artisanal fishing organization at the national level.

We are struggling to find someone to talk to. After several trials, and through a former fisherman, Mr Samuel Amaah Akwete, we finally get an appointment with fishermen from Chorkor, an overcrowded fishing village located on the southwestern outskirts of Accra.

Mr Samuel Amaah Akwete is over 60 years old, sick and tired, but he still insists to make the trip with us. Once on-site, in Chorkor, we are struggling to find our way. Dilapidated houses, waste water flowing from all directions, mingling in the streets are all prevalent features of the place. In the Accra region, Chorkor inhabitants are the ones with the lowest income. Mr Samuel Amaah Akwete had visibly not set a foot in the village for many years. After going in circle for nearly an hour, working our way around smelly puddles, we arrive in a cramped courtyard located directly on the beach. Four men, chatting, are busy mending their nets. We are obviously expected. But not for our purpose – i.e. asking questions.

Amongst the four fishermen, Emmanuel Loco, in his sixties, is sitting, shirtless. He explains that what they had understood was that a team of foreign photographers was coming to take pictures of fishermen in activity. And for this, of course, they expected to be compensated. They want to know how much compensation they can expect. We explain again the purpose of our visit to Ghana and share the experiences we had in other countries we visited previously. As we move forward with our explanations, their faces show increasing disappointment. They were surely not going to be paid. The fishermen do not seem very excited to talk about their activity; they would rather be staging for a photo session.

After another quarter of an hour explanation, they agree to answer our questions. What we want to know is in what context the Chorkor fishermen perform their activity, their relationship with the administration, the changes that fishermen observe at sea.

EVERYDAY, EXCEPT TUESDAYS!

The fisherman Emmanuel Loco, who seems to have a certain authority over the three other fishermen, then speaks. “Fishing is our livelihood. Thanks to fishing, we find ways to take care of our families. Without fishing, we are nothing. It’s an important part of our lives”. He explains that their activity is neither regulated nor monitored. “There is no control by the State. Here, we have absolute freedom. We don’t need a fishing license to fish here”, he continues. “Everyone does what he wants”, he adds with a smile.

At sea, there is no limit either. “We fish anything that is alive, regardless of its size. Here, it is not forbidden to catch small fish”, says the fisherman, under the approving looks of his three colleagues. Here, fishing goes on throughout the year. “We go fishing from January to December. We have no rest period. We fish every day, except Tuesdays. It is the tradition and we respect it”, adds Emmanuel Loco. “Why stop fishing specifically on Tuesdays?”, we ask. “Because it is a taboo to go to sea on Tuesdays”. A belief they all stubbornly respect. Tuesday is therefore the day when many fishermen do some minor repairs on their wooden boats and their nets. In the village, funeral rites are also carried out on Tuesdays.



*Fishermen in
Chorkor.*

FISH STOCKS ARE BECOMING DEPLETED

The four fishermen recognize that, at sea, fish is becoming scarce, but for them, it's all to do with chance. "There are days when you go to sea and come back with big amounts of fish, but there are also days when you come back with nothing, earn nothing. It is a question of luck", explains Emmanuel Loco. Ignorance or bad faith? The fisherman says that it has always been like that since childhood. "Nothing has changed", he said.

Except the fact that the number of fishers has dramatically increased, that the costs of equipment and inputs have become exorbitant. "Engines are overpriced. This is our main concern. On the market, there is only one brand of engine. We would like other brands of engine to be introduced on the market. This would lower the prices, and be more favorable for us", confides Emmanuel Loco. He continues: "Moreover, pirogues are very expensive, nets are very expensive and of poor quality, and fuel is also expensive. We want you to support us to improve our working conditions".

The fisherman explains that fishing brings less and less money. "We cannot earn a living here. This is the reason why some of our compatriots set out in search of adventure and go fishing in foreign countries. They do better in these countries", he says.

"When we return from the sea with the fish, we sell it to the women who dry it and then sell the products on the market. If we catch large quantities of fish, we try and sell to wholesale buyers, in the hope of making better money", concludes Mr Loco.

LACK OF HYGIENE

Around 1 p.m., after our exchange with the four fishermen, we head on for the beach, just a few meters away. The lack of hygiene is blatant. The beach is polluted by plastic waste, human waste, households sewage discharged directly in the sea through pipes. In the middle of that, dozens of children are playing. We meet Mickael Hama, a 27 years old fisherman. Fishing is his sole economic activity. Every day, before dawn, around 4 o'clock in the morning, he and his colleagues head to sea to put their nets in the water before returning. On their way back, they leave the pirogue at about 150 meters from the shore. Fishermen then swim back to reach the beach. This is not a problem for this young man with a boxer's body. "I have been fishing since I was a child. I have no choice. There is no work otherwise. So, I go fishing with my father", he says while trying to catch his breath.

In another courtyard facing the beach, Adzoa Mensah, a young woman in her thirties, is preparing to smoke a few kilos of fish that she just bought. She plunges the fish in reddish water then spreads them on a flies invaded rack. "I am doing this to help my husband to provide for the family. I have three boys, all at school", she says proudly. "The fish I smoke, I sell it in the market and at the railway station. I also sell other foods", adds Mrs Adzoa. But there are challenges. "I don't always have the money to buy the fish and there is no funding available to buy smoking racks. They are expensive".

THE CLAY POT AGAINST THE IRON POT?

After Chorkor, we go to Jamestown, located five kilometers from Accra. Here the fishermen are angry with the Chinese who, according to them, are "fire fishing" and throw back at sea the small fish which they do not need. "The Chinese have been here since 1999. When the Chinese started, we did not know their way of fishing. So we let them do it. But by the time we realized that their



*Adzoa Mensah
is smoking fish
in her courtyard.*

fishing technique was not compatible with what we do here, it was already too late. If we let them continue, it will destroy our work, our lives”, explains Alex Gream, a fifty years old fisherman. “They fish at night, and they use spotlights to attract and catch fish. Small dead fish are discarded at sea and drift towards the shore where they rot. Because of that, it stinks everywhere”, he says.

Mr Gream is angry: “Because of the politics, the Government has accepted that the Chinese come and fish with these methods. But we do not agree with them. We have demonstrated many times, we have spoken on the radio, journalists have written about it in the newspapers, but the situation does not change”. He continues: “The Chinese fishing methods have depleted fish in our sea. There is almost nothing left for us to fish”.

BIOLOGICAL REST PERIOD IN 2016

The Ministry in charge of Fisheries wants to establish a biological rest period from 2016 onwards to replenish the country's fish stocks. According to the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development, Mrs Sherry Ayittey, this biological rest period should consist of the suspension of all fishing for two to three months for the industrial fishing. Artisanal fishers will have to stop fishing a second day in the week, in addition to the Tuesdays. But stakeholders still need to be convinced of the importance of this biological rest period. Consultations are currently taking place. The Minister has put new statistics on the table. Annual catches of small pelagics went from 277,000 tonnes in 1996 to 92,000 tonnes in 2011.

*Fishers in
Anomabo.*



ANOTHER PLACE, ANOTHER REALITY

In Anomabo, – a two hour drive from Accra-, the contrast with what we saw in Chorkor and Jamestown is striking. The beach is clean and fishermen seem to have close relationships with one another. As the sun rises on that Sunday morning, Anomabo beach bustles with activity. In this fishing village of Ghana central region, most pirogues that went to sea early in the morning or the day before are now back. Dozens of fishermen help each other for pulling the long wooden pirogues out of the water. The work is tough, but good mood prevails, songs and war cries resonate. Whenever a pirogue lands its catches, a small amount of fish, – about two to three kilos- , is put aside in a plastic bucket. The sale of this fish will serve to pay the women who, at least once a month, clean the beach.

Dressed in a multicolored cloth, and with a small black cellphone in her left hand, Mrs Aba Mensa Komfo criss-crosses the beach. She walks with hurried steps, stopping from time to time to exchange a few words with the fishermen. Fifty eight years old, Madam Aba Mensa is anything but an ordinary woman. She is one of the very few women owning pirogues. Aba Mensa has four pirogues. Each one has 37 crew members. In total, 148 fishermen are working for her. Almost all of them affectionately call her “Mama Aba”.

She tells us how she got there: “I lived with my husband in Abidjan for a few years. There were problems between us and we split. I came back to Ghana. I thought about what I was going to do to start my new life without a husband. It was difficult”. She continues: Already in my previous marriage, I had some experience of fishing. I took my savings and, with help from my little broth-

ers, I went to the forest where I bought twelve wooden pirogues from carpenters. I brought back the pirogues here. I sold eight of them and I kept four for me. I used the money I had earned from the sale to equip my four pirogues with nets and outboard engines”.

With her four pirogues, Aba Mensa Komfo is assured to have access to fish raw material that she smokes during the fishing season. Eight women help her smoke the fish. After the smoking, the fish can be stored up to six months to be sold at a time when prices are good. “I go to sell my fish in Accra, Kumasi and Mankessim. On the way back, I buy corn, palm kernel oil, gari [cassava couscous] which I sell here”, explains Mrs Aba Mensa. “With the revenue from my four pirogues, I have been able to build ten fish smoking ovens. I have also bought 70 fish smoking racks and a hangar where we smoke the fish”, she continues. Chaïbou Yakoubou, Mrs Aba’s younger brother, says he is very proud of his older sister. “She has been doing this work since she was a child, with our mom. Nowadays, she provides a great example for many people”, he says.

Kwame Bechi is the «bosko» (Captain) of pirogue n° 2 of Madame Aba. He testifies: “It is thanks to this lady that we have work and that we get to feed our families. So whenever we go fishing, we do our best to catch as much fish as possible, to please her. She is very dear to our hearts.”

But this Sunday morning, he and his crew have returned empty-handed from their fishing trip. “Our net was destroyed by an industrial vessel. We came back to try and repair it so to be able to go back fishing”, he explains.

This kind of accident is increasingly frequent. “In fact, there is no delimitation between the industrial fishing and artisanal fishing zones. When an industrial vessel spoils our work, and if we have been able to identify the name of the boat, we go to Tema. There is an office out there where you can complain. If they can identify the name of this ship in their files, then, they can do something like to try to discuss with the boat owner so that there is a consensus. But if you were not able to take the name of the boat, then it’s a loss for you. This has happened to me many times”, explains Aba Mensa Komfo. “Another time, the net of one of my pirogues was destroyed by an industrial vessel. Fortunately, among the fishermen, there was one who knew how to read and could identify the boat. We went to find the boat in Tema. After much discussion, the boat owner



*Aba Mensa
Komfo*

ended up buying us a new net, and this allowed the fishermen to resume their work”, explains Aba Mensa Komfo.

Since this experience, she organizes her crew to make sure there are two or three fishermen on board who can read and write, to be able to report what is happening at sea with her pirogues. “In case of an accident with an industrial vessel, they take the name and number of the vessel, and this enables us to track it and negotiate a compensation”. But, first and foremost, what she wishes is for the Government to better protect artisanal fishers and their equipment by defining zones where they can fish in peace.

A NEED FOR BETTER FISHERIES SURVEILLANCE

A two times we went to the Ministry responsible for fisheries, but we were not able to meet the Minister of fisheries and aquaculture development. Instead, we met the representative of the FAO (United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization), Benjamin M. Adjei, who is the program officer fisheries and aquaculture. He recognizes that fisheries in Ghana evolve in a particularly difficult context. “Artisanal fishing is a sector that many people are not used to defend. When talking about artisanal fishing, we talk about what is happening in the waters in terms of sustainability, illegal activities, etc.”, he says. He describes the support from FAO in the fisheries sector: “We helped the Ministry responsible for fisheries to identify all the pirogues and their owners”, says Benjamin M. Adjei. “The FAO also supported the Ministry responsible for fisheries to develop a legal framework and a plan of action to combat illegal fishing. It is through this support for example that fishing vessels have been equipped with transponders for charting their course”, he adds.

FAO also supports continental fisheries, for restoring and preserving ecosystems, and also for the improvement of fishermen income. But whether it is in maritime or continental fisheries, Mr Adjei underlines that “fisheries monitoring is really lacking in Ghana. What Ghana needs is political good will and an effective surveillance system”, he concludes.



*Benjamin M. Adjei,
Program officer in Fisheries
and Aquaculture, FAO.*

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Artisanal fisheries is now firmly on the international agenda, mainly thanks to the FAO Guidelines to ensure sustainable artisanal fisheries. However, when I think about all the people we met whilst doing this report, the various fishing communities we visited, it's clear that, in their daily lives, artisanal fishing communities are still overlooked by African national policy makers: Lack of management of their fishing activities, lack of access to basic infrastructures and services. As someone told us during an interview, artisanal fishing is a sector that many policy makers are not used to defend or to mobilize for.

A first reason is that the artisanal fishing sector's contribution to food security, job creation, as well as their country's economy is still largely invisible. Unreliable, and often inexistent, data and statistics about artisanal fisheries contribute to vastly underestimate its social and economic importance and its contributions to development, and thus provoke the marginalization of fishing communities in policy-making.

CAOPA demands that appropriate collection methods should be designed for gathering data about the social and economic aspects of the African artisanal fishing sector, and that sufficient human and financial means should be devoted to that task.

A common problem facing all the fishing communities we visited, which confirmed an issue that has been raised time and again by our members, is the problem due to the frequent incursions of trawlers in the coastal area where artisanal fishers operate, resulting in the destruction of artisanal fishing gears, casualties, and fueling over-exploitation of fish resources in the coastal area.

CAOPA demands that African 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 trawlers, and that any violation of this zone by a trawler should be appropriately sanctioned.

But difficulties encountered by African artisanal fishing communities go beyond inappropriate fishing policies. There is a need to take into account fishing communities' interests in all policies and initiatives that affect them. Coastal pollution, resulting from industrial activity or from households waste poured in the sea, are literally choking 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.

CAOPA demands that, 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 are examined and duly taken into account prior to adopting such policies or initiative.

In contrast with this general marginalization of artisanal fishing communities by policy makers, we have witnessed a tremendous innovation spirit within fishing communities, particularly by women active in fisheries, who are putting in place and experimenting appropriate solutions to improve the living and working conditions within their communities.

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.

These demands are targeted towards our national African governments, but also towards the African Union which has the capacity, and the opportunity, through its reform strategy, to raise awareness and convince its members of the necessity to create an enabling environment for sustainable artisanal fishing communities in Africa, informed by the FAO guidelines and by appropriate consultation and direct participation of the African fishing communities.

Gaoussou Gueye
Secretary General CAOPA

Statistics

The statistics provided below are retrieved from the FAO. However, most of times, FAO fisheries data about artisanal fisheries available to the public are outdated, or bear little relation to the reality, consequently under-estimating the importance of the work performed by men and women from African artisanal fishing communities. Some data, such as the number of men and women involved in artisanal fisheries, which is of great importance for designing appropriate policies, are simply non-existent.

We recognize that efforts are being done to address these shortcomings, e.g. by initiatives such as the Global Partnership for Small scale Fisheries Research Too big to ignore <http://toobigtoignore.net/>. We hope such work will result in new methods for collecting and analyzing data allowing for a better representation of the importance of artisanal fisheries' contributions to the exploitation of resources, food security, the creation of jobs and national economies, in particular in Africa.

SENEGAL

Coastline: 718 km

Fisheries contribution to GDP: 1.9%

Production of fish for food use: 421,517 tonnes

Employment in the artisanal sector: 52,000 fishers

Estimate Artisanal fleet contribution to total domestic production: 70%

Consumption of fish: 23.8 kg/cap/yr

Fish contribution to animal protein intake: 40% (2008)

Source: ftp://ftp.fao.org/FI/DOCUMENT/fcp/fr/FI_CP_SN.pdf

MAURITANIA

Coastline: 720 km

Fisheries contribution to GDP: 5%

Production of fish for food use: 680,000 tonnes

Employment in the artisanal sector (men/women): 35,000

Estimate artisanal fleet contribution to total domestic production: not available

Consumption of fish: 10kg/cap/yr (20 kgs in some areas)

Fish contribution to animal protein intake: 18%

Source: ftp://ftp.fao.org/FI/DOCUMENT/fcp/fr/FI_CP_MR.pdf

GUINEA-BISSAU

Coastline: 274 km

Fisheries contribution to GDP: 8.3%

Production of fish for food use: 6,750 tonnes

Employment in the artisanal sector: 1,125 fishers (2001)

Artisanal fleet contribution to total domestic production: 16%

Consumption of fish: 1.3 kg/cap/yr

Fish contribution to animal protein intake: 4%

Source: <http://www.fao.org/fishery/facp/GNB/en>

TUNISIA

Coastline: 1300 km

Fisheries contribution to GDP: 1.4%

Production of fish for food use: 130,000 tonnes

Artisanal fleet contribution to total domestic production: 28,000 tonnes/27%

Artisanal fishing boats: 10,500 (93% total fleet)

Employment in the artisanal sector: not available

Consumption of fish (kg/cap/yr): 11-5

Source: http://www.fao.org/fishery/countrysector/naso_tunisia/en

TOGO

Coastline: 50 km

Fisheries contribution to GDP: 4%

Production of fish for food use: 24,905 tonnes

Artisanal fleet contribution to total domestic production: 70–80 %

Consumption of fish (kg/cap/yr): 7.4

Fish contribution to animal protein intake: 29%

Source: <http://www.fao.org/fishery/facp/TGO/fr>

GHANA

Coastline: 528 km

Fisheries contribution to GDP: 3%

Production of fish for food use: 328,969 tonnes

Artisanal fleet contribution to total domestic production: 70%

Consumption of fish (kg/cap/yr): 28.4

Fish contribution to animal protein intake: 58%

Source: ftp://ftp.fao.org/FI/DOCUMENT/fcp/en/FL_CP_GH.pdf

