

Participation in artisanal fisheries management for improved livelihoods in West Africa

A synthesis of interviews and cases from Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea and Ghana



Participation à la gestion des pêches artisanales pour améliorer les moyens d'existence des pêcheurs en Afrique de l'Ouest

Une synthèse des entretiens et des études de cas réalisés
en Mauritanie, au Sénégal, en Guinée et au Ghana

par

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FAO
DOCUMENT
TECHNIQUE
SUR
LES PÊCHES

432

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ISBN 92-5-104841-X

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PREPARATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document is a study carried out by the FAO executed DFID-funded Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme (SFLP) [GCP/INT/735/UK] and the FAO Fisheries Department Medium Term Programme “Promotion of Coastal Fisheries Management” [MTP 234 A4]. The study aims to derive and disseminate lessons learnt on fisher participation in fisheries management as well as ways of supporting livelihoods through responsible fisheries management.

The basis for this study was provided by four SFLP country reports with case studies on fisher participation in Monitoring Control and Surveillance. Field work for those case studies was carried out in pairs by consultants and staff members from the national fisheries administrations between August 2000 and March 2001: M.O. Mohamed Vall and N.M. Moctar Nech in Mauritania; A. Sall and C.M. Diallo in Senegal; M.M. Diallo and A. Bah in Guinea; and E. Aryee and Q.Q. Ahene-Amanquanor in Ghana. Further field data came from additional field visits and interviews undertaken by Philippe Cacaud, consultant, and myself (from the Medium Term Programme “Promotion of Coastal Fisheries Management”) in June and July of 2001. The analysis and writing of the document took place at FAO in Rome, Italy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Amongst the colleagues at the Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme, I would like to thank Christophe Breuil and Moustapha Kébé as initiators and supervisors of the study. Thanks also to Richard Coutts, Programme Coordinator in Rome, Italy and Benoît Horemans, Team Leader in Cotonou, Benin. The Programme’s National Coordinating Units (NCUs) in Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea and Ghana provided practical support for the field work activities.

Various persons from the Medium Term Programme “Promotion of Coastal Fisheries Management” at the FAO in Rome, Italy provided input and feedback, specifically: the Programme Coordinator Alain Bonzon, Jan Johnson and Dominique Gréboval.

In addition to the above, a number of other colleagues contributed to this study. I would especially like to thank Jeremy Turner, Chief, Fishing Technology Service, for his encouragement and support in realizing this document. I am grateful to George Everett, Rebecca Metzner, Katrine Soma and Rolf Willmann of FIPP, as well as Karin Verstralen (consultant) for critically reviewing different versions of the document and their constructive comments.

Lenselink, N.M.

Participation in artisanal fisheries management for improved livelihoods in West Africa. A synthesis of interviews and cases from Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea and Ghana.

FAO Fisheries Technical Paper. No. 432. Rome, FAO. 2002. 72p.

ABSTRACT

Introduction

This study on "Participation in artisanal fisheries management for improved livelihoods in West Africa" was carried out in the framework of the Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme or SFLP (GCP/INT/735/UK) in collaboration with the FAO Fisheries Department Medium Term Programme "Promotion of Coastal Fisheries Management" (MTP 234 A4). It seeks to identify ways of increasing artisanal fishers' involvement in coastal fisheries management as a means for improving fisheries livelihoods.

To achieve this purpose four SFLP case study reports on Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea and Ghana were analysed, and additional interviews were held in Senegal and Ghana. The analysis focused primarily on the following topics:

- *The role of artisanal fishers and government in marine fisheries management,*
- *Issues and constraints in existing marine fisheries management,*
- *The effect of marine fisheries management on artisanal fisheries' livelihoods.*

Results

Results show that artisanal fishers are generally involved in informal fisheries management measures, which coexist with formal measures initiated by the fisheries administration. Formal fisher involvement is mostly through consultation for the formulation of fisheries laws and regulations, whereas informal involvement consists of formulating and actually implementing local regulations made by community fisher committees under their own initiative.

The most effective cases concern local, informal measures, and cases where fishers and government support and complement each other. Generally speaking, however, government and fishers have different and often, though not always, mutually exclusive objectives in fisheries. Government fisheries policy is generally based on long-term biological concerns whereas artisanal fishers tend to have short-term economic and social goals. Where fisheries management is relatively effective and has positive effects on (some) livelihoods, this is often due to aspects such as strong leadership by local persons, a vested interest of fishers and government in the mechanism, collaboration between the parties involved, clear communication processes and peer learning.

However, whether for formal or informal measures, it appears that only in a few cases are the desired effects on fisheries' livelihoods achieved, such as ensured access to resources, income, and employment. This is due to a number of factors. One factor consists of inefficient processes and procedures for communication and division of roles, responsibilities and capabilities within and between parties involved. A second factor consists of constraints with enforcement. Another factor is that different artisanal fisher groups may have diverging interests in and may be affected differently by fisheries management measures. It would seem that more powerful and influential stakeholders benefit more from these measures than poorer ones. The underlying assumption of this study, that fisheries management improves artisanal fisheries' livelihoods, is thus not self-evident, at least not in the short run. Finally, the analysis shows that stakeholders are not "passive recipients" who are only influenced by fisheries management mechanisms, but active agents that are using, modifying and sometimes ignoring or counter-acting the mechanisms, so as to achieve access to and control over resources, as well as their own, short-term goals.

Conclusions

A number of trends can be identified which are conducive to increased collaboration between fishers and government in fisheries management measures, as well as for an increased attention for livelihoods aspects. On the fishers' side there are already existing (though not generally 'traditional') rules and committees governing fishing and there is an increasing awareness in communities for the need to protect stocks. The government has increasing interest in artisanal fisheries and already existing processes of consultation with fishers for the elaboration of management measures. In addition there are ongoing decentralization processes which promote sharing of responsibilities with local institutions for the management of natural resources and already existing participatory mechanisms such as local fisheries councils and community-based fisheries management committees.

However, a number of factors complicate increased collaboration and consensus-building between fishers and government in fisheries management measures and attention for livelihoods aspects. Different groups of fishers and processors with different interests make collaboration difficult. There is a history of strained relations between fishers and government authorities. The authorities themselves have been unable or unwilling to enforce already existing laws, a situation complicated by unclear mandates or de facto division of tasks between different government organizations concerned with fisheries and maritime affairs. Finally, communication, financing and staffing of government agencies are not always sufficient for responsible fisheries management.

Recommendations:

To arrive at a more livelihoods-centred fisheries management two types of issues must particularly be improved upon:

- 1. All the phases in fisheries management, such as planning, implementation, monitoring, control, surveillance, and enforcement need to be addressed, both individually and as a whole, and clearly linked to livelihoods issues and objectives.*
- 2. There should be a serious commitment to participation, representation, information and communication by those concerned with livelihoods and with fisheries management.*

Concerning the first issue, the FAO, SFLP and partner countries should provide the following support to fishers and officials of government and other agencies:

- awareness raising and training in fisheries management, management mechanisms and management phases with reference to the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries;*
- awareness raising and training on how to include livelihood considerations and objectives in fisheries management;*
- exchange of experiences on fisheries management and management mechanisms through case studies, etc.*

Concerning the second issue the FAO, SFLP and partner countries can provide support to fishers and officials of government and other agencies consisting of:

- awareness raising, training and exchange of experiences on participation and participatory mechanisms at national, local and community levels and supporting decentralization and the shift from consultation to co-management;*
- capacity building of fishers' organizations and strengthening their representation in formal processes;*
- improved collaboration and communication between stakeholders, including the poorest fishers.*

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