

# 6. Understanding the mobility of fishing people and the challenge of migration to devolved fisheries management

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## INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of humanity, migrations always formed an integral part of people's life. During the last decades, the intensification of economic globalisation, the liberalisation of trade and considerable progress made in the fields of transport and communication has led to a significant increase in international mobility. West Africa is no exception to this world phenomenon.

The people of West Africa have a long tradition of mobility; evidence suggests that one in three individuals no longer resides in their place of birth (Randall, 2005). This general trend is also true for fishers and other fishing community members and migration has influenced the sector for many centuries. "Movement and migration are an integral part of most West African fisheries and fishing populations, be these inland, coastal or maritime fishing" (Randall, 2005, p 3). The forms and reasons for migration are many and there is a rich diversity of migratory lifestyles.

Randall (2005) conducted a review of fishing migration in West Africa comparing demographic literature and the fishing literature, and noticed that the latter "describes fishing migrations in ways that omit major issues that demographers would usually consider fundamental to analysis and understanding". These missing issues include, among others, the types of people who migrate and why, their educational level, the characteristics of their family of origin and the sibling group size (Randall, 2005).

Acknowledging that migration is one of the strategies that fishing communities often use in order to secure their livelihoods, the SFLP Pilot Project on coastal fisheries co-management (see Chapter 5) carried out a migration evaluation study with two main objectives: (i) to understand the reasons and motives behind the movements of fishing communities in the region's coastal countries, and (ii) to appreciate what lessons could be learned in order to help formulate national and subregional fisheries management policies and plans that would integrate the migration component and take its role into account in poverty reduction and local development. The evaluation was based on case studies conducted by the project in the four participating countries (Congo, Gabon, Guinea and Mauritania) and in other countries in the subregion, two considered to be countries of emigration (Benin and Senegal) and one country of immigration (Cameroon). The evaluation used both literature reviews and censuses conducted in fishing community settlements. The social, economic and cultural impacts of the migrations were analyzed and strategies for including migrant fishing people in national policies were defined (Njock, 2007a).

This chapter is based on the findings of this SFLP's evaluation and looks into the patterns of migration and mobility among West African fisheries communities with

a view to analyse how resident and migrant interests can best be accommodated for mutual benefit in the context of resource management and poverty reduction. It attempts to shed light on who migrates and the reasons behind mobility and discusses integration of migrants in receiving communities and their roles in local production systems. The central question of how migrant and mobile fishers can become part of devolved fisheries management systems, which are generally based on extending stewardship to local communities, is addressed in the light of SFLP experience and lessons learned by the Programme.

## WHO MIGRATES AND WHY

### Internal vs. international migration

“Initially most populations migrated in response to the movements of fish, but both motives for migration and patterns of migration have become increasingly diverse in recent decades” (Randall, 2005, p 4). In the West and Central Africa region, coastal countries allow entry to migrant fishing communities from neighbouring countries without any restrictions (Njock, 2007a) and it would appear that this relatively open access to resources favours increased migration for fishing. However, as it is generally recognised, migrant communities are not homogenous and also within a single community a variety of fishing migration patterns may be found (Randall, 2005; Sall, 2006). By looking at disaggregated groups of actors, a better understanding of their movements and of the factors driving migration can be gained. In the context of marine artisanal fisheries, Atti Mama (2006) defined several forms of migration (see Box 5).

Spatially speaking two scales have to be taken into account depending on the magnitude of the movements: (i) *internal migrations* limited to within the borders of a country; and the (ii) of the transboundary or *international migrations* of fishing population in the search of a better wellbeing in other countries (Randall, 2005; Samba and Faye, 2006).

### BOX 5

#### Definitions of different types of fisheries migration

**Internal migration:** Migration that takes place between fishing settlements within the same country in order to follow fish stocks or to take advantage of certain facilities or fish prices for during particular periods of the year.

**Short-term migration:** Migration that lasts for a few weeks but less than a fishing season.

**Seasonal migration:** Fishing people, sometimes including family members, that stay in foreign fishing settlements for one or two seasons and then return home for a certain amount of time.

**Long-term migration:** Fishing people that settle abroad for several years (20-40 years or sometimes more) but who always eventually return to their home country, independent of the length of their stay abroad.

**Permanent migration:** Second or third generation fishing people that end up being assimilated into the local population and in most cases also take the host country’s nationality.

**Contractual migration:** Migration that is motivated by an employment contract that has been formally established in the country of origin. The duration of the contract may be for one or several years and the fisher makes visits to his home country during this period (circular migration).

Source : Adapted from Atti Mama, 2006.

### ***Internal migration***

Short-term, long-term or permanent; it developed between one fishing settlement and another within the same country and several different forms have been noted. The duration varies according to country and the dynamic fluctuations characterising fisheries sector influence its patterns. One example of internal migration in Guinea with a seasonal character has been described by Solie (2006): from December to February, the Senegalese-Mauritanian upwelling affects the border area between Guinea and Guinea-Bissau and fishers from both countries are attracted by the then abundant catches of small-pelagics. This fish migration pattern also gives reason to fishers from Conakry to go to Cap Verga, Matakang or Koba in order to look for waters rich with fish.

There is no indication that the seasonal migration concerns women or children although it is generally well known that some fishers bring their wives to get help with cooking and/or post-harvest activities (processing and marketing of fish catches) and their children to work as crew members. However, when fishers migrate for longer periods, i.e. when the migration becomes circular or permanent, they generally move with their families. One illustrative example is described by Sall (2006) and concerns migration in Mauritania from the village of N'Diago in the south to Nouakchott. Until the end of the 1970s, fishers used to migrate according to a fairly established pattern; they fished in the area of Nouakchott from January to April and then returned to N'Diago for the agricultural season May-December. At a point, the return to the village for the agricultural season started to be perceived as a waste of time and the shorter trips away evolved into seasonal migration with temporary absences for up to nine months at the time. With the development of Nouakchott city and the urbanisation taking place (housing estate ghost towns developing around the capital), the N'Diago fishers changed their migratory patterns further. Many fishers now had plots of land and the progressive process of getting installed in a new home made them extend their stays in Nouakchott from a few months per year to several years. Moreover, families were moved and parents, wives and children followed the household head to the capital. The continued development of Nouakchott also influenced the fishing, making it a more and more profitable business and eventually putting an end to regular home trips. Nowadays, only social visits are made (baptisms, weddings, funerals, religious events, etc) to the village.

This migration can thus now be called permanent. More and more of those in Nouakchott who were originally from N'Diago have no longer any ties with the village. Today, more than a third of the population of N'Diago has settled in Nouakchott with their families where they have better access to social services and facilities (health centres, drinking water supplies, schools for their children, etc).

Other forms of internal migration that are found in the region include the circular migration of the *Mousgoums* fishers from Lake Chad who travel to the Cameroonian coast (Ngo Likeng, 2006), the fishers from the Saloum Island who move to the inland fishing ports of Senegal (Samba and Faye, 2006), and the Guinean inland farmers and pastoralists who settle in coastal landing sites in order to engage in fishing although they have no earlier fishing experience (Solie, 2006). These recent types of internal migrants without fishing experience are known by the term "new fishers" and they are playing an increasingly important role in many countries. In 1989, a population census among fishing boat owners in Guinea showed that 25 percent were neither *Sousou* nor *Baga* which are two ethnic groups historically associated with fishing in Guinea. In 2002, the new fishers in Mauritania represented 34 percent of the total number of fishers.

### ***International migration***

International migration is usually a long-term phenomenon. Fishers from Benin, Ghana and Nigeria moved to the countries in the south of Gulf of Guinea (Cameroon, Congo

and Gabon) many years ago and some are there since several generations (Atti Mama, 2006). Those who work as crew on Ghanaian purse seiners have usually migrated under contractual arrangements. Others (gill netters, long-liners, etc) have done so under other conditions (Atti Mama, 2006; Ngo Likeng, 2006). Migrating fishers with employment contracts do not necessarily always work for the same employer but can, as noted by Randall (2005) and Ngo Likeng (2006), change fishing boat and type of fishing that they engage in from one season to another. In spite of long periods abroad, these migrants tend to keep in contact with their home countries by visiting from time to time, participating in religious or cultural ceremonies.

In the northern part of the region, from Guinea to Mauritania, a number of different migration strategies can be observed. Samba and Faye (2006) described the cases of the Senegalese fishers *Sérères Nyomikas* from the Saloum Island and the *Wolofs* fishers from Saint-Louis. For a long time and up until the early 1980s, the former used to migrate to the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau and Guinea to fish during the dry season (January-June) and return to Senegal for the rainy season to work in the fields. However, Samba and Faye noted that, due to a decline in agricultural activities during the last ten years, the time spent in the foreign country had increased and that the earlier seasonal migrants had become permanent immigrants, some having spent more than 20 years in the host country. With regard to the fishers from Saint-Louis, they are generally contractual migrants, fishing in Mauritania under employment contracts of 4-5 months at the time. Most of them return to Senegal during the seasonal closure of the fisheries (July-September) or for religious and family holidays. According to Sall (2006), a new type of migrants has also developed in Mauritania. These are emigrants from other West African countries who are on their way to Europe but who stop to work, for shorter or longer periods, in Mauritanian fishing ports in the post-harvest subsector in order to finance their onward travel.

Not all international migration is permanent or long-term. Once settled in their country of destination, migrants may combine several different migration strategies and make shorter or longer trips away from their home base. Ovono Edzang (2006) observed that Beninese, Ghanaian and Nigerian fishers who lived in Cocobeach (Gabon) often made daily fishing trips into the close by waters of Equatorial Guinea. It was also noted that fishers based in Libreville moved seasonally (July-August-September) towards the northern part of the coast to fish bonga (*Ethmalosa fimbriata*). These seasonal movements were generally motivated by a wish to avoid management regulations according to which the bonga fishery around Libreville was closed during this period and not a strategy for following migrating fish stocks. Ngo Likeng (2006) also observed seasonal movements from one location to another by migrant fishers based on the Cameroonian coast.

### **The role of women in migration**

Migrants and migratory behaviour vary according to gender and women have a special status in the migration process. During short-term migrations, wives do not usually go with their fishers husbands. This is also the case among the Mauritanian *Imraguenes*, and for Ghanaians, Ivorians and Malians who on their way to emigrating to Europe have a stop over in Mauritania (Sall, 2007). In the absence of their spouses, women who stay behind take care of children and the elderly.

For long-term migration, many women follow their husbands on their travels. In some communities, women migrate with their husbands only under certain conditions. For example, according to Sall (2006), a married *Imraguen* woman who has not yet had her first child would not be authorised to migrate. Moreover, only boat owners or captains are allowed to travel with their wives. In the country of destination, the majority of women work in fish processing and marketing and hence support their husbands' work. Women may also contribute to the financing of fishing activities by lending their savings to fishers (Ngo Likeng, 2006; Ovono Edjang, 2006; Sall, 2006;

Samba and Faye, 2006). Some women become boat owners which facilitate their access to fish for processing and marketing. For those who do not migrate but stay in the home country, some of the money sent back by their husbands will typically be invested in small businesses allowing them to gain a certain independence during the absence of their husbands. In some communities, marriage between immigrant fishers and local women take place facilitating the integration of migrants into the host community. During long-term migration, it is not uncommon that fishers become polygamous. Also, among those who are not married, cohabitation and frequent change of partners is common. As has been shown in recent studies with regard to the health conditions in fishing communities, this life style is a concern considering the propensity of sexually transmitted diseases among which the most threatening is HIV/AIDS (Njock, 2007a) (see also Chapter 9).

### Children and migration

Children also take part in migration and those who travel, both boys and girls, are of all ages and could be fishers or fish workers (processors, canoe builders), training to become fishers or fish workers, of school age or younger (Sall, 2006). With regard to the fishers from Saint-Louis (Senegal) migrating to Mauritania, Samba and Faye noted that children went to the Koranic school in their new country. However, transferring from one place to another generally has considerable influence on children's education. There tends to be a lack of appropriate schools and education facilities in the often remote areas where migrants settle (Ngo Likeng, 2006; Sall, 2006). Even in urban areas and when parents manage to enrol their children in public or private schools, there is often a lack of monitoring and support that makes successful education difficult. Moreover, the frequent travelling, the often generally inauspicious fisheries environment and the – implicit or explicit – requirements for extra labour or help disrupt children's schooling and make them leave school prematurely to engage in fishing. Ngo Likeng indicated that some migrant fishers in Cameroon who sent their children to college in town had them live with local friends. Children who stay behind in their home countries tend to attend school but are deprived of the presence and support of their parents.

### Statistics on fisheries migration

In spite of the importance of fisheries migration at the level of national economies (employment, food security, etc), there are only limited statistical data available on the phenomenon, both in host countries and in the countries of origin. Barely a handful of countries have figures that allow for an assessment of the magnitude of migration (see Table 7). From these data, it can be noted that in most of the countries, migrants represent the majority of the fishers.

Information on demographic characteristics is generally lacking and there is, for example, no data with regard to migrants' family status or educational level. Only the data for Congo give some indication of the age composition; according to Boungou (2006), the migrant fishers are generally between 20 and 50 years old with an average age of 42 years. This average is higher than the overall average age of fishers in the

TABLE 7  
Percentage of fishers who are migrants

Country	Percentage	Sources
Benin	55	Atti Mama, 2006
Cameroon	81	Ngo Likeng, 2006
Congo	42	Boungou, 2006
Gabon	80	Ovono Edzang, 2006

more important fisheries centres in Congo, indicating that active fishers are relatively young. Boat owners and experienced captains are commonly found in the age group 60-70 years and play an important role for the training of young – often below 20 years of age – fishers.

### Reasons and motives for migration

The reasons why fishers and fish workers decide to migrate are various and relate to environmental, social or economic factors. According to Samba and Faye (2006), the following motivates Senegalese fishers to migrate:

- A fall in catch rates in Senegalese waters aggravating already difficult conditions, including the lack of land for agriculture around Saint-Louis and the increased salinity levels in the agricultural land of Saloum Island. The lack of agricultural land as a reason for fishers to migrate has also been mentioned by Ngo Likeng (2006) with regard to Beninese fishers. In fact, the Beninese, Togolese and Ghanaian coasts do not offer good opportunities for livelihood diversification into agriculture due to the erosion and scantiness of the coastal belt (Gbaguidi, 2000; Sedro, 2001; Yeboah, 2001) and this situation motivates migration.
- The possibility to save money when away from everyday family obligations, giving the opportunity to invest in productive assets and later on in real estate in the home country (Atti Mama, 2006; Ngo Likeng, 2006).
- Cultural habits; the fishers of Saint-Louis consider the Mauritanian waters to be part of their traditional fishing grounds and migrants maintain local social networks in Mauritania facilitating their settling in. Along the same lines of reasoning, Solie (2006) noted the facility by which the *Temne* of Sierra Leone have settled in Guinea thanks to their cultural similarities with the local *Baga* population.
- Generally severe living conditions with a lack of safe drinking water and no markets where fish can be sold profitably coupled with communication difficulties on Saloum Island.
- Search for high value species and new markets.

Solie (2006) and Ngo Likeng (2006) also noted that social and political conflicts can act as triggers for fishing people to migrate. Some examples from Guinea include the arrival of about one hundred Ghanaian fishers after the fall of Kwamé Nkrumah in the state coup in 1966 and the Liberian and Sierra Leonean fishers who arrived in 1989 and 1996, respectively, due to the war situations in their countries. In the 1960s, Nigerian fishers moved to Cameroon and other countries in the region to escape the Biafra war. More recently in Nigeria, the development of the petrol industry in coastal areas causes competition among different resource users (water, land, mangroves, etc) and fishers and fish workers sometimes chose to emigrate (Ngo Likeng, 2006).

With regard to internal migration from one region to another within the same country, Solie (2006) shows how the unbalanced regional development in Guinea has played an important role in making populations move from the interior of the country to the coast. By reviewing poverty indicators for different regions (Maritime or Lower Guinea, Middle Guinea, Upper Guinea and Guinea Forest region), Solie showed how the conditions conspired to attract populations from other regions to the coastal zone where the open access character of the fishery allowed them to fish, also without any in-depth knowledge of the profession. The sector also absorbed the unemployed and qualified people from other professions in search for work managing to find a way to make a living from fishing or related activities. Similar situations were found in the other six countries surveyed (Benin, Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, Mauritania, Senegal). The fisheries sector thus plays an important role of a safety net for many migrants, including those who are not fishers or fish workers originally. Solie also claimed that the generally low profitability in agriculture and the price differences between agricultural and fishery products motivated coastal farmers to start fishing even when there was no such tradition in the family.

TABLE 8  
Reasons for migration

"Push" factors	"Pull" factors
Avoid social obligations	Better prices and stronger markets
Conflicts	Cheaper inputs e.g. gear, nets, fuel
Social pressure: remittances	Instrumental reasons e.g. earn enough money to get married, retire, allow for investments (fishing equipment, housing), etc.
Reduce consumption at place of origin	Better fisheries and fish stock abundance
Reduction in fish stock abundance	Better livelihoods: safety net (internal migrations)
Poverty	Better socio-economic facilities/infrastructure
Political instability in countries of origin	Easy social integration (social and cultural networks)
Lack of socio-economic infrastructures	
Lack of alternatives activities to fisheries	
Environmental degradation (draught, salification of agricultural areas, etc.)	

In summary, fishing communities that decide to emigrate do so for a number of reasons; either their difficult current situation pushes them to leave hoping for a better life elsewhere or there are factors attracting them to a new place, e.g. the possibility to increase their income or the access to new resources. These two sets of dual factors – “push” and “pull” – are summarized in Table 8.

### INTEGRATION WITH RECEIVING COMMUNITIES

As briefly mentioned above, fishers who migrate can generally be classified into two main categories according to whether they leave home as unattached – free – migrants without prior employment engagements or whether they are contractual migrants having a contract with a crew hirer or a boat owner in the country of destination. Their belonging to one or the other group predetermines the type of relations they will have with the recipient community.

#### Unattached migrants

The unattached or free migrant counts on being able to use existing social networks of compatriots who have already established themselves in the new country for settling in with the host community. This scenario was cited by Samba and Faye (2006) with regard to Senegalese fishers in Guinea, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau and Mauritania and is in fact the most common migration strategy along the West African coast. Solie (2006) explained that, in Guinea, the new migrants would be given host families who would help them, against the performing of chores and minor tasks, to find work while waiting to be recruited as crew on fishing boats. According to Ngo Likeng (2006), Ovono Edzang (2006) and Atti Mama (2006), the newly arrived migrant would be introduced to the traditional chief or village head against the payment of a symbolic tithe. This system of payment would indicate that the open and free access to resources is a relative concept. If the migrant failed to respect the procedure, a conflict could ensue. Ngo Likeng (2006) reported that, in Cameroon, it turned out that the tithe was not paid to the traditional chief but collected by a group of more or less permanent foreign migrants. By doing so, they did in fact strip the locals of their traditional authority over the resource – a right established according to informal resource management systems – and the act not only jeopardised the relation between migrants and locals but also severely threatened the sustainability of the resource.

#### Contractual migrants

With regard to contractual migrants, two examples illustrate current practices. The first one concerns the company system that owners of Ghanaian purse seiners practice, employing foreign fishers for 4-5 years at the time who return home at the end of

their contracts (Ngo Likeng, 2006). During the contractual period, visits to the home country are rare. The second example is described by Sall (2006) who explains how Mauritania, since the early 1990s after the political problems with Senegal in 1989, has a contractual system for Senegalese fishers who want to fish in Mauritanian waters. These contracts must be established by a person who physically or morally is Mauritanian. The migrants entering the contract are allowed to stay in Mauritania from December through to August, i.e. for nine months corresponding to the fishing season. These migrants generally return to Senegal at the end of the season or for religious holidays. As is also the case with the Ghanaian contractual migrants, fishers can change the boat or manager that they work for from one fishing season to another. During their stays in Mauritania, the Senegalese fishers live in “fishing camps” that are set up along the coast and where the majority of the fishers are migrants. The camps are often isolated and the difficult living conditions – no safe drinking water, no electricity, no health services, etc. – do not encourage married fishers to bring their families; wives and children instead often go to live in Nouakchott or Nouadhibou.

### **Stopover migrants**

Soli (2006), Samba and Faye (2006), and Sall (2006) noted that, in addition to the fishers who are directly involved in catching fish and the fish processing and marketing women, there is a vast number of other migrants of varying nationalities in most Mauritanian landing sites. These migrants mainly work in post-harvest activities such as fish salting, drying and brining, sorting, gutting, filleting and scaling of fish, selling ice and salt, and maintenance of equipment, or they are small shop owners or traders. Among these migrants, there are many who intend to continue their trip to Europe but who stay for shorter or longer periods in Mauritania in order to recuperate and maybe get reorganised after having been sent back to Mauritania from unsuccessful migration attempts via Morocco or Algeria. For them, and for others involved in post-harvest and auxiliary activities, the fisheries sector represents a lifebelt preventing them from falling into the poverty of their surroundings.

## **INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS**

### **Life in a new community**

According to the literature available on fisheries migration, integration of migrants into recipient communities is not always easy. Several authors explain that most native and foreign communities live next to each other but do not work together or collaborate. They do not belong to the same society and hence do not share the same concerns. As a consequence, there are misunderstandings that often lead to conflicts, and marginalisation and exclusion of immigrants (Njock, 2007a). There have also been reports of religious types of conflicts within immigrant communities, brought across from their home country and escalated to a point where diplomatic interventions by consular authorities have been required. This situation has occurred among Senegalese immigrants in Mauritania (Sall, 2006). Fortunately, however, most conflicts among fishing people can be resolved thanks to the internal dynamics of the community (Akoma Poathy, 2006; Sall, 2006; Fregene, 2007).

The overt or latent conflicts involving migrants are often associated with shared exploitation strategies. According to Atti Mama (2006), conflicts do generally not occur when immigrants and natives use different gear. On the other hand, conflicts can be aggravated if there is competition for access to the same resources. The exploitation of the resources of the Cameroon Estuary involving Cameroonian *Mousgoum* fishers and foreigners represents such an example (Ngo Likeng, 2006). Generally, native fishers tend to claim that foreigners use destructive fishing practices and they also blame them for depriving local fish processors of their production by giving priority to their foreign wives, who in turn resell the fish to local traders but at prices that are

felt to be high (Solie, 2006). In spite of this generally difficult state of affairs, there is evidence of positive developments, although as isolated cases. In Cameroon, for example, crews of mixed nationalities have been observed (Ngo Likeng, 2006) and in many countries natives and foreigners inter-marry. This could be a sign of improving integration between migrants and host communities. In the countries that participated in SFLP's PP2 on coastal co-management (Congo, Gabon, Guinea and Mauritania), this positive trend was translated into the establishment of socio-professional associations and consultative groups consisting of both local and foreign migrants. Some of the latter held posts in the new organizational structures that were put in place (Njock, 2007a). However, continued support from the fisheries administration and those involved in local development would be necessary in order to sustain these initiatives.

### ***The host government***

The relationships between native and migrant fishing people are not the only aspects that need to be addressed if better integration of the two groups is sought; there is also reason to assess the role of governments. Several factors could be considered in this respect. For example, many of the fishing camps where migrants live lack virtually all basic social facilities and services: education, health centres, safe drinking water, etc (Djangone *et al.*, 2003; Konan *et al.*, 2003; Ndia *et al.*, 2003). While promoting the system of fishing camps in Mauritania, the government has not made the effort to provide even the most basic services (Sall, 2006). In fact, a lack of confidence in the local government on behalf of immigrants is reported in all the countries studied (Benin, Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, Guinea, Mauritania and Senegal). Migrants often feel that they are – rightly or wrongly – harassed by the immigration authorities, the police and the fisheries surveillance administration. Moreover, they feel threatened by the initiative taken in many countries to develop the coastal area and consider themselves being the prime victims of such activities. In 2003, a community of migrant fishing people were evicted from the Owendo area (Libreville, Gabon) because of an extension of the harbour (Angoue, 2004). For the same reason, migrants in the Dockyard harbour in Limbé (Cameroon) and in the Pointe Noire harbour (Congo) are also likely to lose their dwellings, their smoking ovens and workshops (SFLP, 2004; Ngo Likeng, 2006), a development that is likely to increase their level of vulnerability. The evicted fishing people are admittedly offered new plots but this has not diminished their frustration since they were not informed beforehand of the measures of which they are becoming the victims and they do not have the financial means needed for relocating to the allotted area.

Hence, both external and internal factors must be taken into account simultaneously in order to allow for a more harmonious integration of migrants into host communities. This can be achieved through the establishment of a fisheries management system that incorporate the concerns that migrants have and, at the same time, make them participate in the decision-making process.

## **FISHERIES GOVERNANCE AND MIGRANTS**

### **The role of the government**

Without doubt, migrant fishers and fish workers contribute to the economic development of their host countries by creating additional employment within the sector, by transferring technologies to local fishers and by supplying local markets with high quality fishery products and generating export earnings. While being conscious of their status, suffering from marginalisation and exclusion, they rightfully expect recognition on behalf of their host community and the authorities of their new country as well as a certain level of social equity in the various aspects of community life (Rawls, 2003; Fraser, 2005). In its capacity of facilitator and arbiter,

it is the responsibility of the host government to take the initiative to legitimise the status of immigrants. This process would need to start by the reestablishment of confidence on behalf of the migrants vis-à-vis the government since, as mentioned above, many have little trust in the authorities of the host country. This confidence restoration process would require a dialogue between all concerned with a view to stimulate a higher degree of unity among partners (Pomeroy, Brenda and Harkes, 2001). Other actions that would also be needed in order to achieve cohesion include the improvement of migrants' access to basic social services and their inclusion in decision-making processes.

It is thus a question of finding mechanisms for improving the involvement of migrant fishers in the formulation and implementation of fisheries management policies, and in local development and poverty reduction strategies. This can be achieved through the creation of policies that are inclusive and promote participatory resource management. In the workshop on fisheries migration that was organised within the framework of SFLP's PP2 in Mauritania in March 2007, it was recognised that the strategies needed in this respect have to be adapted to the situation in each country with regard to the status of the general political framework and its current dispositions for decentralisation and participation (Njock, 2007a).

### **SFLP's impact with regard to integrating migrant fishing people in resource management and local development**

According to findings by Atti Mama (2006), it would appear that development activities carried out in a number of countries in the region during the last few decades targeting small-scale fisheries communities generally favoured nationals and systematically isolated migrants. This situation started to change in 2000 thanks to support by SFLP. The Programme sensitised fisheries administrations of the importance of including all groups within a community, without exceptions, in local development activities (FAO, 1999).

Fisheries migration studies conducted by the SFLP PP2 showed that fisheries policies and laws do not generally make specific reference to migrants. These instruments do instead include provisions for the creation of consultative committees in which fishing people can be represented through their membership in fisheries socioprofessional associations (Kinfoussia, 2005; Sy, 2005; Akoma Poathy, 2006; Konaté, 2006). Some of these local associations also include foreigners and could hence constitute a vehicle for migrant participation.

Most countries participating in the SFLP exercise have recognised the necessity to legally allow for the participation of small-scale fishers and fish workers in resource management and the need to adapt their national fisheries legislation accordingly (Njock, 2005; Njock, 2007a). Such revisions of the legal provisions were seen as opportunities to address the integration of migrants and, for example, in Guinea the approach was followed successfully leading to a formal recognition of fishing communities and also implicitly to the involvement of migrants in resource management and local development. To varying degrees, similar developments have been noted in other countries. Also in cases where the legal recognition of communities as partners in management has not yet taken effect formally, a tangible change has been achieved in practice as fisheries administrations now tend to consult and involve both natives and immigrants in questions related to the fisheries sector (SFLP, 2005a; SFLP, 2005b; Ngo Likeng, 2006; SFLP, 2006). Migrant fishing people also benefited from a number of activities initiated by the SFLP PP2, including the strengthening of their capacities and knowledge in areas such as literacy, hygiene and health, environmental management, organizational development, lobbying and negotiation skills (Njock, 2007a). These activities constituted important incentives in the empowerment process.

### **Rights of migrant fishing people**

The UN Migrant Workers Convention that came into force in 2003 defines a number of standards and principles that aim to protect the specific human rights of migrants. It also specifies what is required of national governments of both sending and receiving countries, in order for these rights to be protected. In addition to confirming basic human rights, a number of articles in the convention are particularly relevant to migrant fishing people, e.g. article 9 presenting migration as a right in itself and articles 27-30 giving migrants and their children the right to equal access to social security, medical care, housing and education as nationals of the receiving country. Article 33 gives migrants the right to be informed of their rights and obligations under the law of the host country and article 39 specifies the right of mobility and to choose residence within the new country (OHCHR, 2003).

The concerns that regard migrants' right to basic social services have been discussed in the sections above. They form part of the co-management process that, in the context of the coastal countries of West Africa, aims at the responsible and sustainable management of the resources at the same time as fighting poverty in the communities that exploit these same resources. The planning and introduction of co-management mechanisms have to be an inclusive process and avoid the marginalisation of vulnerable groups, women and migrants. The process needs to be supported by an appropriate legal and regulatory framework which gives fishing communities the right to participate in decision-making on issues of their concern. Experiences show that the adoption of laws and regulation may be a lengthy process. However, the co-management mechanisms can be put in place in anticipation of their legalisation by the government (Pomeroy, Katon and Harkes, 2001). This was the approach used by SFLP. The Programme also promoted livelihood diversification activities in communities within the framework of co-management and governments were sensitised with regard to the need to include fishing communities in decentralisation policies and poverty reduction programmes (Njock, 2007b, Thorpe, 2005). The activities implemented did not overlook the migrant fishers and fish workers; in Congo and Gabon, SFLP's integration strategy contributed to the inclusion of migrants in national programmes for the fight against HIV/AIDS (Njock, 2007a).

### **LESSONS LEARNED FOR THE FUTURE**

Fishing communities are complex entities with regard to living conditions, composition, social organization and the strategies they apply in order to ensure their livelihoods. One of these strategies is migration and this phenomenon is as complex as the fishing communities themselves. All through the above analysis, a better understanding of the reasons behind fisheries migratory movements along the coast of West Africa have been sought by reviewing different aspects of this mobility, e.g. scale, magnitude and duration. The improved knowledge is needed to inform fisheries management policies and poverty reduction strategies in fishing communities. The main conclusions are:

- Among the many reasons that make fishing people migrate, economic factors (search for markets, opportunities to save for future investments, security lines, etc) are without doubt the most important ones.
- Migration constitutes an opportunity both for the host country (contribution to local and national economies, and to food security) and for the country of origin (fund transfers from abroad).
- The establishment of measures for the protection of the specific rights of migrant fishing people can constitute an opportunity for introducing local co-management mechanisms.
- The lack of detailed information on the characteristics of migrant fishing people and on their economic importance constitutes a handicap when it comes to the formulation of policies supportive of fisheries migration.

These lessons-learned lead to three main recommendations:

- A political environment supportive of the protection of migrant fishing people's rights should be promoted.
- Regional research for the generation of data and information needed for policy formulation should be supported.
- The experience of SFLP with regard to institutional capacity building in the context of participatory fisheries management should be consolidated.

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## 7. Microfinance, capacity building and livelihoods diversification

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### INTRODUCTION

The understanding of the potential role of credit and financial services in poverty reduction has evolved considerably since the experiences in the 1950s and 1960s when the concept was introduced based on a perceived need to satisfy a lack of formal credit available to small-scale farmers. During this first period, governments and aid organizations engaged in programmes extending credit to rural families, generally through their male household heads. The design of the credit programmes was based on the perception that poverty could be overcome by making subsidised credit available for increasing productivity and adopting modern technologies and thereby raising incomes. In the 1980s, the focus changed and rural women involved in small businesses became the main target for support programmes, now often run by NGOs. However, the rationale and contents of these programmes were similar to the earlier ones and problems of high default rates and less than expected successful outcomes continued (Matin, Hulme and Rutherford, 2002; Verstralen, 2005).

Along with the changed view on poverty and the poor, recognising the multidimensional characteristics and heterogeneity (see Chapter 2), the rural credit concept evolved into a more flexible approach and a tool for helping poor households to achieve their priorities and reduce vulnerability in addition to increasing incomes (Matin, Hulme and Rutherford, 2002). A new type of agents developed for the delivery of the more flexible microfinance services needed; 'microfinance institutions' (MFIs). MFIs are generally independent non-government institutions, providing loans, saving schemes, insurances and other financial products to poor communities, usually on commercial terms. Alongside these new institutions, informal financial systems continue to exist and fill important roles. These include individuals specialising in money lending, lending among family members, friends or work colleagues, saving schemes administered by deposit collectors, and various forms of group finance (Verstralen, 2005).

However, both the new MFIs and the traditional informal financial services sector have weaknesses. One major concern is that the microfinance offered by MFIs does not reach the poorest. With regard to informal services, they are not without conditions and access may not be available to everyone. Moreover, the informal sector has limited capacity and is particularly weak in providing support in situations of widespread covariant shocks affecting many community members at the same time (Matin, Hulme and Rutherford, 2002; Verstralen, 2005).

As in other rural communities, the demand for financial services in West African fisheries communities is diverse. Most fishing people are engaged in microentreprises or wage labour. Men are often crewmembers, not owning their own boats or equipment, and many fish processors and traders – who often are women – work at the lower end of the market chain.

The first credit programmes specialising in fisheries were often supported by a government fisheries department, NGO or development project. As with other support programmes, they were focused on providing credit for productivity increases, i.e. improved gear and increased fishing inputs. Women, the poorest and other

marginalized groups were often excluded with credit schemes focusing on fishers and boat and gear owners. Today, a number of MFIs have succeeded in reaching poor and marginalized groups with innovative financial products and processes, while also being financially viable. There is, however, still room for improvements and further development of products and services that will assist the poor in the fisheries sector.

This chapter discusses the economic environment of the poor and analyses the need for financial services in fisheries communities. SFLP supported several microfinance initiatives through its field projects and an account of SFLP experience is provided, showing how microfinance can be an important bit in the jigsaw puzzle of poverty reduction and responsible fisheries. However, the microfinance services need to be appropriately designed and targeted to be effective.

### **POVERTY AND THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT IN FISHERIES COMMUNITIES**

The economic environment of poor rural communities can be characterised by two main features: monetary transactions are often in very small amounts and there is a high level of insecurity and risk with regard to money flows (Matin, Hulme and Rutherford 2002). In small-scale fishing communities, poorer groups include fishers operating without having their own gear who are dependent on income from the often small portion of the catch that constitutes their salary. Relatively few fishers own fishing equipment and canoes or other boats. Most fish processors, vendors and transporters are microentrepreneurs or workers buying and selling fairly small amounts of fish with little investment in processing or marketing equipment. In particular female owned businesses tend to remain small with few substantial assets. Income patterns are often unpredictable and variable according to fishing seasons, and income and expenditure flows rarely coincide (Verstralen, 2005, K. Holvoet personal communication, 2007).

Fishing people are vulnerable to hazards at the household level, e.g. sickness, premature death, insecure employment conditions and non-successful fishing trips, as well as to risks in the surrounding environment such as natural calamities, resource depletion and national economic recessions or crises. These factors shape their need for and use of financial services and foster risk spreading strategies. Often savings and credit are used as substitutes for insurance and these three categories of financial services are interrelated. Generally in poor rural communities, risk spreading takes place through the diversification of economic activities and the establishment of financial relationships within a wider network of individuals, groups and agencies (Matin, Hulme and Rutherford, 2000; Tietze and Villareal, 2003).

In fishing communities, there is often a particular need to support diversification of economic activities in order to lessen the fishing pressure on heavily exploited fishery resources and to reduce the dependency on these resources. By promoting and supporting livelihood diversification out of the fisheries sector, benefits generated by fisheries management can be reinforced and the vulnerability of fishing people reduced. In addition to strategies for accommodating 'excess' fishers and help them engage in alternative activities – in other sectors or in related activities such as, for example, small-scale aquaculture or waterbased ecotourism – support to responsible investments in small-scale fisheries can contribute towards improved fisheries management. Microfinance can play an important role in both these regards as well as in helping fishing people to deal with vulnerability in a broader sense and thus increase their capacity and interest in participating in fisheries management (Verstralen, 2005, Doulman, 2004).

### **SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES FINANCIAL SERVICES**

Until recently, financial services to fishing communities were almost exclusively provided by the informal sector. In addition to unregistered sources of credit such as money lenders, pawn brokers and traders, this type of services also include different

forms of 'groups finance' and 'intermittent lending' in which individuals can be both borrowers and lenders. This dual role and the flexibility of the system allow fishing people to anticipate lifecycle needs, emergencies and opportunities and create an informal but vital insurance network (Matin, Hulme and Rutherford, 2002; FAO, 2006a).

Group finance schemes are found in two principal forms, i.e. rotating savings and credit associations (RoSCAs) and accumulating savings and credit associations (ASCrAs). In these arrangements, group members collect savings together and lend primarily to each other. In a RoSCAs, members save the same amount each period and members take turns to borrow the accumulated amount. The arrangement comes to an end when all members have had their turn. ASCrAs are generally not time bound in the same way and savings are accumulated from members until one of them is willing to take the pooled amount on loan. The loans are used in variety of ways, for day-to-day needs, life cycle events and for economic activities (Matin, Hulme and Rutherford, 2002; Verstralen, 2005).

Intermittent lending on a non-profit basis is common among fishing people and takes place among family members, friends, work colleagues or from captains to crew members, or from fish processors and traders to their workers. Intermittent for-profit lending includes advance sale of fish by a captain or boat owner to a processor or trader. The cash loaned usually helps finance the fishing trip and the agreed repayment amount – the quantity of fish to be provided – tends to include a profit and a risk premium. Deposit collectors or 'money guards' are commonly operating both on a profit and non-profit basis, in the latter case generally keeping money for family members or friends. In many West African small-scale fishing communities, professional deposit collectors collect savings on a daily basis. There is generally no interest paid on these 'saving accounts'; instead a fee is usually charged for the safe keeping of the funds (Matin, Hulme and Rutherford, 2002; Verstralen, 2005).

However, as mentioned above, informal services have weaknesses and cannot meet all financial services needs. Some of the main constraints include (from FAO, 2006a and K. Holvoet, personal communication, 2007):

- Access is often conditional and the services are not available to all. Considering the potential risk related to the high level of mobility in the fisheries sector, individuals are cautious as to whom they entrust their savings or extend credit. Social networks, personal relationships and reputation are important assets for accessing the services and there is likely to be bias against the more poor and vulnerable.
- Informal financial services can generally only provide smaller amounts of funds that may not be enough for more important investments in boats, engines or gear, although there are exceptions with boat owners organising special saving schemes for this purpose.
- Informal finance can usually not help fishing communities to deal with common risks in the economic environment. This would include for example threats related to natural disasters or resource depletion, i.e. events that affect the fishing community as a whole.

The early formal finance programmes – developed several decades ago – offered subsidised credit aiming at increasing small-scale fisheries' productivity and developing the sector as a whole. These schemes were generally driven by fisheries departments and based on their development plans. However, results were disappointing and credit schemes were unsustainable due to high default rates and mismanagement. They were also biased towards boat and canoe owners, representing only a small and generally better off part of a fishing community. In addition, the subsidised credit schemes are likely to have contributed to capital intensification and increased fishing capacity without considering the potential long-term effects on fishery resources (FAO, 2006a).

**BOX 6**  
**Financial services in southern Lake Volta in Ghana**

According to an SFLP survey in 2002, relatively few fishers have access to formal credit from banking institutions in the coastal communities of southern Lake Volta in Ghana. Instead, fishers generally obtain credit from fish traders. The traders provide fishing inputs and the fishers ensure a regular supply of fish. Fish sold under these arrangements fetch a price that is 10 to 25 percent lower than the market price. Fishers can also obtain credit from net makers. Usually, a 50 percent deposit is required when purchasing a new net but a credit corresponding to the whole value of the net can be obtained for two to four weeks. Interest rates are charged for the credit.

Few fishers use money lenders since the interest rates are considered too high, as much as 10 percent daily in some places. Some villages operate their own welfare schemes where members deposit daily or weekly contributions. Loans can generally be obtained from these funds at an interest of 40 percent per month.

The Agricultural Development Bank, in collaboration with rural banks and private entrepreneurs, has introduced innovative microfinance schemes combining savings and loan facilities in a microfinance system approach called 'Susu'. This system is available to both men and women but was still not widely used when the SFLP survey took place in 2002.

*Source:* Pittaluga *et al.*, 2003.

These failures, together with a deregulation of financial markets and an improved understanding of the financial services needs, stimulated the development of MFIs. However, the marginalisation, insecure rights of access to resources, dependence on uncertain production systems and the risky nature of many fishing operations make the fisheries sector unattractive to MFIs, which in many cases continue to be based and oriented towards urban commercial activities. While there are MFIs that include fishing people among their clients, and even those that focus exclusively on fishing communities, access to appropriate financial services remain unsatisfactory. Box 6 gives an example of local microfinancial arrangements available in southern Lake Volta, Ghana.

#### **SFLP MICROFINANCE EXPERIENCE**

The challenge and policy issue addressed in the SFLP microfinance component was how small-scale fisheries could be included in mainstream microfinance development for poverty alleviation and how microfinance should be designed in order to contribute to responsible management of fishery resources and not lead to, as had sometimes been the case earlier, increased fishing capacity beyond sustainable levels. More specifically, the overall learning objective was to improve the understanding of how microfinance could contribute to:

- Reducing vulnerability and hence increase the capacity and interest of the most vulnerable to participate in fisheries management,
- Promoting or supporting diversification out of fisheries by developing financial products for this particular purpose,
- Boosting responsible investments in small-scale fisheries by using fisheries management plans to guide the evaluation of applications for investment loans. (Holvoet, 2007).

While the exact process varied from one country to another, the overall SFLP approach to microfinance support was built around partnerships, capacity building and institutional support. The microfinance activities were implemented through individual Community Projects but were also included in the subregional co-management and

post-harvest Pilot Projects.<sup>16</sup> Through the Community Projects, the Programme disbursed a total of FCFA 53 million (US\$88 000) for microfinance support to three main types of microfinance activities: revolving funds managed by a community-based organization (CBO), revolving funds managed by a CBO but with management support from a local MFI, and microfinance services provided by local MFIs. Unfortunately, the Community Projects were generally of short duration and the Programme's had somewhat limited resources for monitoring at the local level. Hence, projects working directly with CBOs and setting up new revolving fund arrangements often proved less successful; reimbursement rates were low and conflicts occurred with regard to who in the group should benefit and receive credit. When the Programme started to work more through partnerships with local organizations, results became much more encouraging. Support was then primarily extended to already existing structures – informal microfinance groups within CBOs or MFIs – rather than to the setting up of completely new arrangements.

Extensive consultations with concerned stakeholder organization, e.g. MFIs, fisheries departments, NGOs and fisheries umbrella organizations, were held at the beginning of projects to seek partnerships and collaboration. In many cases, an initial process was started or supported by SFLP and then carried on by an NGO or MFI. In Senegal, SFLP supported the two Senegalese NGOs ADPES (Association for an Economic and Social Progress Movement) and FENAGIE-Pêche (National Federation of Fisheries Economic Initiative Group) in analysing the impact of a new experimental microfinance association that they had set up in Mbour in 1999 in collaboration with NOVIB (Dutch Oxfam affiliation). The association, MECPROPEM (Mutual Savings and Credit Association for the Promotion of Fisheries) was the first organization of its kind in Senegal and grouped fishers, fish processors and vendors together in a decentralised microfinance system. By tailoring its financial services to the needs of the targeted beneficiaries, MECPROPEM's membership grew rapidly and the initiative was expanded to other villages. In 2005, there was a network of twelve "MECs" spread out in fishing communities along the coast (Cissé, Sarr and Kébé, 2003; Fenagie-Pêche, 2007).

In Burkina Faso, the MFIs existing around the two lakes Bagré and Kompienga were initially reluctant to work with the Programme and the fishing communities since they had earlier bad experience of low repayment rates. With the facilitation of SFLP, a better understanding of the fisheries sector and its risks and opportunities was gained on behalf of the financial services providers. Credit was extended, in particular to women groups, for starting non-fisheries income generating activities, as well as for fish processing and household expenses. Some of the MFIs are now members of the co-management committees for the two lakes (Konan, 2007).

The Programme's microfinance activities were implemented as a central part of the efforts aiming at improving the integration of fisheries communities in local development with regard to, for example, access to basic services such as education, health, and social and family welfare. The enhancement of social cohesion and increased participation of marginalised groups in community groups and decision-making were other priorities of the local development theme (Holvoet, 2007). An example of the successful inclusion of vulnerable groups is the case of Cotonou, Benin, where an MFI called ID (*Initiative Développement*), with the support of SFLP, started to include HIV/AIDS victims among its clients. Through a partnership with a national NGO – Racine – ID could ensure that its clients received the medical and social services they needed and hence reduced the risk of extending credit to HIV/AIDS victims (FAO, 2006a). Also in Congo, in Pointe-Noire on the Atlantic coast and in Makotipoko inland, savings and credit schemes as well as organizational development training were included in the strategies developed by the National Aids Control Council (*Conseil national de la*

<sup>16</sup> See Chapter 1 for an explanation of the overall structure of the SFLP projects and activities.

**TABLE 9**  
**Examples of livelihood diversification activities in Ghana, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire**

Ghana	Mali	Côte d'Ivoire
Kente carpet weaving	Vegetable gardening	Agriculture
Snail culture	Handicraft	Production of pastry, juice and ice
Batik and dyeing		
Ornamentation		
Cosmetics and ointments		
Bakery (traditional bread baking)		
Tree planting		

Source: Konan, 2007

*lutte contre la Sida – CNLS*) for assisting households with chronic disease to diversify their economic activities (FAO, 2006a). Another pro-poor approach was used in the Gambia where simplified forms and didactic materials were developed in order for illiterate and lesser educated groups to be able to benefit from microfinance services. (Holvoet, 2007).

Through stakeholder consultations and the continued contacts at different levels, SFLP played a facilitator role for micro-macro and cross-sectoral linkages and created awareness of the need for microfinance in the fisheries sector. Through strategic partnerships, national seminars and exchange visits, the need for and requirements of pro-poor microfinance was communicated, at least to some extent, at the meso and macro levels in Benin, the Gambia and Niger. Exchange visits also allowed for experience sharing between communities and countries (Holvoet, 2007).

Microfinance was closely linked to the promotion of co-management, both as part of the broader development perspective that was incorporated in the SFLP co-management approach (see also Chapter 5) and more directly as a means to finance livelihood diversification. The loans taken by community members were used in a number of ways and varied between countries and locations. The use was influenced by the state of the local fishery resources – the better the state of the resource, the more investment in fishing activities – and the seasonality of fishing. The choice of what economic activities to undertake were guided by two basic motives: their feasibility and proven track record of profitability. Generally traditional activities that were known to the loan taker – or known of from others – were chosen. Table 9 gives some examples of livelihood diversification activities in fishing communities in Ghana, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire financed through microcredit.

In Ere in Chad, the Programme supported an already existing CBO, Walta, consisting of both fishermen and women processors and traders. The microfinance intervention was linked to responsible fisheries and allowed fishers to gradually replace their dugout canoes – used both for fishing and transport – with plank canoes. Those who did not own canoes earlier were helped to invest in this indispensable means of transport. Moreover, in combination with training and information on responsible fishing practices, fishing nets of the regulated mesh size were introduced. Thanks to microfinance, Walta was able to stock and supply these nets that had earlier only been available from traders at higher prices. The women members of Walta invested in Chorkor ovens<sup>17</sup> for smoking fish and were increased their profits thanks to reduced post-harvest losses and better quality products.

In some countries, post-harvest actors and activities were specifically targeted. In addition to the livelihood diversification angle, the Programme aimed at improving

<sup>17</sup> A so called improved traditional fish smoking oven, originally developed in Ghana.

access to microfinance services for the post-harvest sector with the intention to contribute to increased value added and incomes without intensifying the fishing pressure on scarce resources. In Gabon, for example, a fish value chain analysis showed the need for specific credits by different actors to increase their efficiency and improve access to, among other things, ice and transport. By applying a gender sensitive approach, gender issues were addressed at the same time. In Mali, savings and credit interventions were recommended to fund the different actors in the value chain and improve traders' negotiation capacity. This applied to both women and men but women were generally found to be more vulnerable in the context of changing market structures and globalisation (see also below and Chapter 10) (Tindall and Holvoet, 2008; K. Holvoet, personal communication, 2007).

The SFLP experience demonstrated that it is important to offer local flexible financial services and to combine savings and credit schemes. The participation of the poor is often made possible by allowing for appropriate grace periods and repayment in small but frequent instalments (Matin, Hulme and Rutherford, 2002). Interest rates and repayment schedules need to take the pattern of financial flows and risks in fishery activities into account. In Ere in Chad, the women group of the CBO Walta appointed a collector to make weekly rounds to members' houses to collect money for repayments. At times of financial difficulty, the repayment frequency was allowed to become more flexible but the overall loan reimbursement rate remained close to 100 percent (Heidrich, 2005). MECPROPEM in Senegal assesses credit risks according to different fisheries professions and targets its financial products accordingly (Cissé, Sarr and Kébé, 2003).

Insurance and other services could also be linked to the microfinance scheme (Verstralen, 2005). Savings are an important aspect and an often common misunderstanding is that the poor cannot save; they generally can although not in large amounts (Matin, Hulme and Rutherford, 2002). At the beginning, the group-based revolving funds set up by SFLP did not require the members to make savings. However, experience showed that microfinance schemes combining savings and credit were more successful. The principle of requiring savings before extending credit was generally applied by SFLP's partner organizations. It also proved important to offer saving and repayment schemes for credit that took individual needs into account. MECPROPEM in Senegal offered a variety of savings schemes (demand accounts, fixed deposits, project saving plans, secured savings) with different interest rates. An awareness campaign helped promote a savings culture in the fishing community and new credit products were developed according to the needs of the fishing community members. Another of MECROPEM's strengths was its strategic location on a fishing quay in Mbour close to its target membership. In 2003, repayments rates were 98 percent (Cissé, Sarr and Kébé, 2003).

Successful microfinance schemes were developed based on traditional informal forms of financial services such as RoSCAs – also called "tontines" in West Africa – combined with stricter financial management and organizational support. The fundamental principle of individual loans underpinned by group responsibility and solidarity has proved to be a sound and appropriate form for savings and credit schemes in many instances. In Burkina Faso, the SFLP partner MFIs invested in training for their members in organizational development and financial management as well as in providing advisory services (Konan, 2007). However, motivation of group membership must be linked to shared problems and opportunities for solutions within the group context and group dynamic. The motivation of access to credit will stay an individual need and will not necessarily provide a basis for group dynamics and strengthening of the organization. In Niger and Nigeria, revolving funds caused conflicts and the association of professional MFIs had to restore confidence through training, and the introduction of clear policies and management procedures (Holvoet,

2007). When groups exhibit a sufficient level of social cohesion, peer pressure can be a strong support for compliance and success.

Along with promoting a savings culture, the support to the development of other capacities is important. Literacy is of great importance to successful microfinance support. The SFLP supported literacy training in the fishing communities of Bagré and Kompienga in Burkina Faso. Some 570 fishermen and women fish processors participated in basic and advanced literacy training. In addition to being able to do their bookkeeping and better respect the repayment schedule of microfinance loans, the newly literate also noted advantages in being able to better follow the weighing of fish at the landing site and take notes in meetings. Many women experienced increased self-esteem which had a positive impact on their abilities to participate in associations, carry out economic activities and taking part in decision-making. The MFIs perceived clear benefits from literacy in terms of better reimbursement rates and promoted literacy training in relation to microfinance (Holvoet, undated).

In the Gambia, SFLP conducted a literacy programme adapted to the needs of women and women groups in relation to microfinance. A specialised curriculum was developed focusing on microfinance management, use of market information, use of mobile phones and health issues. The benefits of the training included improved independence, an increased tendency to send children to school, and easier access to government services and microfinance institutions (Holvoet, undated).

Business skills training for target beneficiaries always accompanied SFLP's provision of microfinance and organizational development support proved to be crucial to microfinance interventions. In Cameroon, training in organizational development for women groups resulted in the registration of the groups and changes in practices which allowed the groups more financial autonomy and to develop partnerships. Bookkeeping was introduced and maintained by women who had received training in accounting. In Tanji, the Gambia, more microfinance loans started to be used on business development when related training was provided.<sup>18</sup> Ten percent of the credit union members diversified into activities outside the fisheries sector. (Holvoet, 2007).

## **GENDER AND MICROFINANCE**

Small-scale fisheries in West Africa are characterised by a fairly clear distinction between female and male occupations although a more in-depth analysis often reveals a more complex picture. While women are generally not directly represented in the capture subsector, i.e. they do not go out fishing on the canoes and boats, it is not unusual that female fish traders finance fishing trips. Women are also generally active as fish processors and vendors, and can as such also finance fishing trips by advancing payment of fish. The system of fishing, processing and trading and of financial flows is however diverse and varies from one country and place to another. These relations and interactions need to be clearly understood before intervening in the sector in terms of providing microfinance (Verstralen, 2005).

In several SFLP projects, microfinance activities had an explicit gender focus. This was the case particularly in Benin, the Gambia and Niger where extensive studies on gender issues in relation to microfinance were carried out and gender-sensitive microfinance programmes were implemented. The use of credit is often influenced by gender issues. Due to women's often prominent role in fish processing and trade, the availability of financial services for women has a strong influence on this part of the value chain. SFLP experience also showed that women are more likely to invest in non-fisheries activities than men. In Chad (Ere) and Burkina Faso (Bagré) women spent 30

<sup>18</sup> The training covered, among other things, management of savings and credit cooperatives, roles and responsibilities of group members, gender in practice and in management of savings and credit cooperatives, processing and conservation skills and livelihood diversification (Holvoet, 2007).

and 42 percent, respectively, of their total loan amounts on investments in economic activities outside the fisheries sector. The corresponding figures for men were 15 percent in Ere and 16 percent in Bagré (Holvoet, 2007).

In some cases, men in fishing communities have more difficulty in accessing formal credit than women. MFIs that have experienced repayment difficulties when extending credit to fishers and that thereafter shy away from the fishing communities, may be more inclined to work with women groups when convinced to return. In Burkina Faso, where the Programme intervened to re-establish the relationship between financial service providers and the fishing communities, women and women's groups received far more credit lines than their male counterparts (Konan, 2007).

Gender aspects in relation to fishing communities are further discussed in Chapter 10.

### **LESSONS LEARNED FOR IMPROVING MICROFINANCE IN FISHERIES**

The microfinance element was a relatively small part of the overall scope of SFLP but constituted at the same time a critical complementary activity in the context of many of the other activities. Unfortunately, in several cases, the microfinance interventions were introduced at a fairly late stage in the Programme implementation process and there was generally not enough time to obtain clear results and to properly analyse and verify their relevance with regard to the learning outcomes that the Programme had aspired to. Nevertheless, the experience generated lessons learned contributing to a better understanding of the need and requirements of pro-poor microfinance in the fisheries sector for poverty reduction and responsible fisheries.

Poor and marginalised groups can and should be included in microfinance arrangements and appropriately designed microfinance initiatives can reduce vulnerability. In order to offer relevant financial services, i.e. mainly combinations of savings and credit schemes, a good understanding of the poverty context is necessary and the microfinance support programme has to be pro-poor and customer-tailored, specially targeting groups of the community that are commonly excluded from the local development process. The inclusion of poor and marginalized groups in microfinance is likely to facilitate their participation in other community based activities and can enhance their contribution to co-management arrangements.

A holistic perspective and partnerships were essential parts of the SFLP approach and local MFIs played a key role, also as partners in a wider sense in co-management activities. However, MFIs often need to improve their knowledge of the fisheries sector in order to develop appropriate financial products. SFLP was proactive in working with existing financial service providers and also played a catalytic role in creating contacts and links between different actors leading to improved access to microfinance for fishing communities. This role was also closely linked to the importance of empowering local community groups to enable them to better benefit from existing support structures. Organizational development and enhancement of skills – including literacy – are essential ingredients in an empowerment support package.

Diversification of economic activities is an important component in the efforts promoting responsible fisheries and improved fishery management. Microfinance has an important role to play in this context but needs to be combined with appropriate technical support and training. It should also be recognised that the wish and ability to diversify have boundaries which are influenced by risk perception and that new economic activities are likely to be more successful if related to existing and traditional livelihood occupations. Information and training are essential, also when credit is used for activities directly related to fishing, and microfinance should be seen as an integral part of local development and fisheries management. Only in this way can the full potential synergy effects of microfinance, capacity building and livelihood diversification be fully harvested and contribute to sustainable development and responsible fisheries.

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## 8. Innovations in communication enhance grassroots development

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### INTRODUCTION

Information and communication (IC) are fundamental elements in any development activity and cut across the whole process of problem identification, project formulation and implementation, and dissemination of results. Strategic IC actions are essential to any activity aiming at creating wider cross-sectoral and micro-macro linkages, and for influencing policies, institutions and processes at national and regional levels. Successful outreach and effective dissemination of messages and relevant results are important for local activities to have a wider and more sustainable impact as well as for contributing to the collective international knowledge on best practices.

The concept *communication for development*, implying “the sharing of knowledge aimed at reaching a consensus for action that takes into account the interests, needs and capacities of all concerned” (Servaes and Malikha, 2004, page 4), dates back to the 1960s and IC components had become common in development projects by 1980 (Coldevin, 2001). The earliest and most basic form of communication for development is information dissemination and motivation for which broadcast media and radios have been extensively used. Coldevin, (2001) gives a number of examples of successful radio broadcasting programmes and campaigns in agriculture and the health sector in the 1970s.<sup>19</sup> It is still considered an effective tool because of its general availability. Communication for development activities involving the training of extension workers have often relied on “group media such as slides, film-strips, audio-cassettes, flip-charts, village theatre and video” (Coldevin, 2001, page 4 Part 1). When used by a facilitator, these media have the advantage over broadcasting that the information flow can be adapted to the audience and allows for interaction with the facilitator. These aspects became even more important with the advance towards interactive stakeholder participation in development planning and implementation in the 1990s. A shift from ‘teaching them’ to ‘learning with them’ occurred, taking local knowledge into consideration and building on existing strengths (Coldevin, 2001). The sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA) developed from these concepts (see Chapter 1). Another influential development is the rapid evolution of *information and communication technologies* (ICTs) – including in particular computers, internet and mobile phones – that are increasingly being used as part of *information, education and communication* (IEC) actions in development (FAO, 2007; Stienen, Bruinsma and Neuman, 2007).

Effective communication is a key to effective participatory processes. IC are crucial to individuals in rural communities for making strategic livelihood decisions as well as for decision makers in organizations at the meso and macro levels working for poverty reduction (Chapman, Slaymaker and Young, 2003). In the context of resource management and responsible fisheries, effective communication is also an essential component of any co-management set-up. A study by Crona and Bodin (2006) in Kenya showed that social networks determined the communication patterns among community groups. The study illustrated how communication often occurs mainly

<sup>19</sup> E.g. the “Masagana 99” campaign in the Philippines in 1974 (rice production) and the “Man is Life” (health) and “Food is Life” (nutrition) in Tanzania in 1973 and 1975 (Coldevin, 2001).

**BOX 7**  
**COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT**

***"If information and knowledge are central to democracy, they are the conditions of development "***

Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary-General, in an address to the World Bank Conference "Global Knowledge '97" in Toronto, Canada in 1997.

among individuals belonging to the same professional groups or group of fishers using the same gear type. While fishers often possessed good knowledge of "their" local resources, this information was rarely shared with non-fishers or fishers targeting other resources. Hence, the potentially more influential groups of non-fishers in the community had limited communication with the fishers and hence limited access to information for their decision-making. This structure of the communication network and the lack of cross-sectoral communication appeared to be a main reason for why the community had been unsuccessful in introducing community based fishery management. Unless communication channels can be made effective among different groups of the community, it will be difficult to achieve successful fisheries management (Crona and Bodin, 2006). Communication is however not always automatic and appropriate methods are needed to ensure information flows and participation leading to the wanted development results.

The use of modern ICTs offers a great potential to contribute to poverty alleviation and the successful implementation of technology supported interventions, e.g. web based price and market information systems for small-scale farmers, is already taking place in many locations in Africa and elsewhere (Stienen, Bruinsma and Neuman, 2007). However, ICTs require appropriate adaptation and effective adoption by local communities in order to contribute meaningfully to the improvement of livelihoods (FAO, 2007). Satellite connections and mobile phones are rapidly changing the access to internet in rural areas, but still only 4.7 percent of the population of Africa are internet users.<sup>20</sup> This can be compared with 42.9 percent in Europe and 70.9 percent in North America (Internet World Stats, 2007). Literacy is still not universal; the average literacy rates for Sub-Saharan Africa is 50.4 percent for women and 68.8 percent for men (1995-2005, UNESCO, 2007a). While modern communication media are important, they are not an aim in themselves and the importance of interpersonal communication and folk media must not be forgotten. A combination of "old" and "new" media, adapted to local conditions, is likely to be most successful (Servaes and Malikhao, 2004; Stienen, Bruinsma and Neuman, 2007).

This chapter reviews the different IC dimensions of SFLP's work. After giving an overview of overall Programme IC and outreach issues, SFLP's community communication strategy is presented and SFLP participatory approach to communication is illustrated by a case study from Congo. Thereafter, the use of ICTs in small-scale fishing communities is reviewed and case studies from Guinea, Burkina Faso and Mali are presented demonstrating how technologies can be used effectively for communication led development in the context of poverty reduction and responsible fisheries. While it is argued that the Programme was less successful in its global outreach activities, important achievements were made at the local level with also some impact on national policies. IEC became a crosscutting theme in SFLP field activities and the Programme was successful in using a variety of communication techniques, ranging from social communication tools such as theatre-for-development

<sup>20</sup> An internet user is defined as someone with access to an internet connection point and having the basic knowledge to use web technology (Internet World Stats, 2007).

activities to GPS and modern technologies, for achieving its priorities. The experience shows the importance of giving IC sufficient attention in a development programme such as the SFLP, both with regard to consolidating results and outreach at the overall programme level and including IEC actions and appropriate communication tools at the community level.

### **SFLP COMMUNICATION STRATEGY AND GLOBAL OUTREACH**

Although IEC actions became an integral part of the SFLP field activities and processes, SFLP did in fact not have a clear and coherent Programme-wide IC strategy.<sup>21</sup> Approaches and methodologies for different IC needs were developed and implemented as the Programme progressed. The different aspects in which IC were important can be divided into three main areas, i.e.:

- Programme outreach and dissemination of messages, based on SFLP results and achievements, to a wider audience.
- IEC in the context of projects, i.e. the enhancement of access to information and communication capacities at the community level as well as the strengthening of micro-macro and cross-sectoral linkages for information sharing and communication between community members, the Programme, and government and other development agents.
- Use of ICTs as part of Programme activities at the field level, e.g. GPS, radios and mobile phones.

While SFLP was successful in using innovative and effective approaches with regard to the latter two areas, i.e. the strengthening of IC capacities in communities and the use of ICTs – which are further discussed and illustrated by case studies below – its ability to disseminate and share results effectively with a wider audience was less convincing. Still, the communications team that was established within the Regional Support Unit (RSU) in Cotonou, Benin,<sup>22</sup> produced many useful and good products that drew on the field experience and were distributed widely in the Programme region. These included the *Liaison Bulletin* and *Info-Flash*, two regular publications available both in English and in French. A total of 23 issues of the *Liaison Bulletin* were produced containing some 100 articles on SFLP field experience. The range of issues was broad and all Programme countries contributed articles. *Info-Flash* was an initially monthly and later bimonthly newsletter giving highlights of activities, meetings and other Programme aspects that were of interest to those involved in SFLP in the region. Both publications were distributed internally and externally across the region. These publications were the Programme's main dissemination vehicle in the region and also used by the Programme's National Coordination Units (NCUs) to inform partners on SFLP. The RSU in Cotonou was also responsible for the set-up and running of a library and a Programme Web site (Cunningham and Holleran, 2007). Moreover, a number of practical guidelines and planning tools were developed, e.g. the Gender Training Manual and Community Project Formulation Guide.<sup>23</sup>

Other material produced by the programme – or with support from it – include videos and radio programmes, a book,<sup>24</sup> journal articles, and a series of short reports on pertinent issues: *New Directions in fisheries - A series of policy briefs on development*

<sup>21</sup> The term IC is here used as a generic abbreviation for Information and Communication and encompasses different aspects both at Programme and community level. Information, Education and Communication – IEC – is the combination of strategies, approaches and methods used at the community level for enhancing local capacities and capabilities to access and use information and knowledge.

<sup>22</sup> Chapter 1 provides more details on the overall Programme structure and organization.

<sup>23</sup> The *Liaison Bulletin* and *Info-Flash* issues as well as the different guidelines and manuals are available at the SFLP Web site: [www.sflp.org](http://www.sflp.org).

<sup>24</sup> Neiland, A.E. and Béné, C. (eds), *Poverty and small-scale fisheries in West Africa*. FAO/Kluwer Academic Publishers. 2004.

issues.<sup>25</sup> The policy briefs aim at contributing to improved awareness on issues relevant to the small-scale fisheries sector and are directed towards the wider development community. The themes selected for the briefs are in line with the principles of the sustainable livelihoods approach and include, for example, microfinance, literacy, gender and HIV/AIDS.

Some of the SFLP material and in particular the policy briefs have been somewhat criticised for not reporting more on SFLP experience but instead providing a general summary on the different subject matters. The reason for not drawing more directly on SFLP experience is linked to the fact that there was no communication component built into SFLP from the beginning. There was also a general lack of systematic monitoring and analysis of Programme results in a way that could be used for assessing impact and for reporting to a wider audience and at a global policy level. It is hence difficult to report on the effect of SFLP's information dissemination efforts and how exactly receivers used the knowledge acquired. Nevertheless, SFLP did contribute to increasing the regional and global awareness of small-scale fisheries and the sustainable livelihoods approach as well as of some specific issues such as the economic contribution of small-scale fisheries and HIV/AIDS in fishing communities. What may still be missing is empirically supported conclusions with regard to what results can be obtained by combining approaches for poverty reduction and responsible fisheries (Cunningham and Holleran, 2007). While this FAO Fisheries Technical Paper provides some of this analysis, more emphasis on information and communication aspects from the beginning of the Programme would have facilitated the process and enhanced the understanding of the lessons learned that have been generated.

## COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

### Institutional support and participatory communication

Fisheries communities are generally rich in information about their own livelihood assets and strategies but may need to supplement and elaborate on this through social, educational and institutional communication<sup>26</sup> in order to fully participate in problem analysis, project preparation and implementation processes (Heidrich, 2001). Communication is a key to facilitate the process that many communities will have to go through to make positive changes for improving their livelihoods (Holvoet, 2007) and includes a two-way information flow between communities and the meso and macro-levels of development actors and decision makers.

SFLP's adoption of the SLA required communication approaches that were different from what had been prevailing in development in the fisheries sector, e.g. top-down environmental education, training and extension. By implementing the principles of the SLA, the Programme used participatory communication approaches that put people in the focus and built on existing strengths, included micro-macro linkages and were cross-sectoral. For the benefit of project planning and implementation, a community communication strategy was developed. This strategy was based on the introduction of IEC actions with a view to address information needs at the micro level (community), meso level (organizations working with the community, including the SFLP NCUs) and macro level (national policy) (Heidrich, undated). At the same time as attention was given to institutional support and reinforcing capabilities and capacities at different

<sup>25</sup> 15 Policy Briefs have been prepared, which are also available at [www.sflp.org](http://www.sflp.org).

<sup>26</sup> "Social communication establishes dialogue, plans community activities and enhances mobilisation within the community. Educational communication shares knowledge and skills in order to increase the efficiency and viability of livelihoods strategies. Institutional communication creates information flows for permanent dialogue and stimulates partnership between the various stakeholders, assisting the improvement of Policies, Institutions and Processes (PIPs)." (Heidrich, 2001, p.13).

institutional levels, innovative communication methods were used directly by the Programme and its partners in the planning and implementation of field activities.

Institutional support included training at the community level – community members and organizations – and for partners at the meso-level as well as for the Programme's NCUs. It complemented other field project activities and covered, among other things, documentation of and training in participatory methods such as PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) techniques for Programme, government and NGO facilitators and field workers (Heidrich, 2001). Technical capacity training and development of basic capabilities in literacy and organizational management for community members were integral parts of many project activities and also implemented as cross-cutting themes. This strengthening of educational communication skills, particularly for women, reinforced interactive participation and improved a sense of self-esteem and empowerment (Holvoet, 2007). Box 8 provides further information on literacy in fishing communities.

Social communication played a particularly important role in the Programme's success in creating dialogue and involving stakeholders, including the participation of marginalised groups. In the context of co-management – of fishery resources and of common market infrastructure – training in social communication was a key component, both for ensuring transparency at the start of activities and then throughout the process for improving accountability and guiding conflict management. Often the process begun in an environment where stakeholders did not communicate constructively but blamed each other for the degradation of the resources or lack of maintenance of infrastructure<sup>27</sup> as well as the ensuing conflicts. The building up of skills in communication, negotiation and facilitation of facilitators at the meso-level proved to be crucial for successfully introducing co-management, specifically for resolving disputes before escalating into larger conflicts. Social communication also contributed to ensuring broad based participation, including marginalised groups that otherwise may have been excluded.

The community communication strategy supported SFLP's overall holistic approach encouraging “the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, both ‘vertically’ from fishing people through to the administration, and ‘horizontally’ across sectors” (Cunningham and Holleran 2007, p. 45). Actions addressing micro-macro linkages were recognised as essential for achieving changes in overall policies in a number of areas including gender, inclusion of fishing communities in national development processes and access to resources. Direct actions at the macro policy level varied according to the local process and included studies, national workshops, regional fora, production of IC material or lobbying when such opportunities presented themselves (Holvoet, 2007). Close cooperation with strategic partners played an important role in achieving results.

Some of the Programme's most successful activities, e.g. addressing HIV/AIDS and participatory surveillance, were built around effective partnerships and appropriate communication methodologies, including strengthening of institutional communication between communities and decision makers at higher levels. In countries where there was a balance between institutional support activities and field projects, the Programme's influence at the policy level was stronger. Not all experiences can be documented in detail but by communicating micro-level evidence, macro-level policies and processes were influenced. Countries where such changes took place included Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, DRC, Guinea Conakry, Niger, Nigeria, the Gambia, Ghana and Sao Tome and Principe. Some examples include the inclusion of fishing

<sup>27</sup> This refers to Programme experience in Garoua, Cameroon.

**BOX 8**  
**Literacy in fishing communities**

Literacy is a key aspect of human development influencing people's livelihoods in a fundamental way. In fishing communities, literacy and numeracy are generally integral to every day life and are for example used for record keeping, in marketing and other business activities, and communication. In many situations, the access to information and resources are subject to literacy and numeracy skills. Such capabilities are often a prerequisite to be able to benefit from support programme or to improve livelihoods in other ways by, for example, understanding and exercising legal rights. In the more and more international market for fish and fishery products, fishing people increasingly need literacy skills to be able to access information, communicate and to benefit from commercial opportunities.

Studies undertaken by the SFLP in Niger, Sao Tome and Principe, the Gambia and Burkina Faso suggest that literacy rates in fishing communities are often lower than in other rural communities. Reasons for this situation relate to, among other things, the dynamics of fishing livelihoods – including seasonal migration – social marginalisation and limited access to schooling in remote areas. However, there are regional and local differences and the level of functional literacy and numeracy may be different from the literacy level that is defined within the context of formal school attendance. Informal notes on scraps of paper or the ability to use mobile phones are examples of functional literacy that may go unnoticed because it is not related to formal schooling. Depending on what the literacy skills are needed for, education in different languages may be needed and the language taught in schools and education programmes do not always match these needs. In West Africa, fishing people may want to know French or English in addition to local language literacy.

Where SFLP offered literacy and numeracy training to community members, some of the perceived benefits included better working community-based organizations (e.g. notes taken during meetings; increased communication between members and leaders; better financial management capacity and for elaborating action plans) and a generally higher degree of involvement, and information at the individual and household level (e.g. recognition of importance of children's education and medical consultations; access to information through documents and newspapers; improved relationship between women and men leading to more participatory decision making).

*Sources:* FAO, 2006 and Holvoet, 2007.

communities in national HIV/AIDS programmes in Benin and Congo, and the legalisation of participatory surveillance in Guinea (see also below) (Holvoet, 2007).

By implementing an SLA based communication approach, SFLP experienced how the IC capacities and capabilities of formal and informal institutions at the micro, meso and macro levels could be strengthened. At the project implementation level, the Programme learned – and applied this knowledge – that different approaches are needed at different stages of the development process and in accordance with potential issues and problems that exist or arise. In order to address such sensitive issues as risky sexual behaviour and prostitution in the context of HIV/AIDS preventions, SFLP and its partners used theatre-for-development (TfD) as a means for communication and the case of Pointe-Noire in Congo is described below. TfD was also used successfully in the SFLP co-management activities, in particular for participatory monitoring (see also Box 9).

**BOX 9**  
**Theatre as a tool for development**

To use theatre for passing on a message or explaining a concept is not a new phenomenon but something that has been used in various contexts for more than a hundred years. The technique is mentioned in the thesis *Theater as a Means of Moral Education and Socialization in the Development of Nauvoo, Illinois, 1839-1845* (Hurd 2004 cited in Wikipedia). The concept has also been used to give marginalised groups a possibility to express themselves and tell what they think. The Brasilian Augusto Boal called it “theatre of the oppressed” (Boal, 1977) and this form of *theatre-for-development* (TfD) is now being used by development facilitators.

TfD can be used for passing messages, education, participatory analysis and other processes when participation is desired but the issues are complicated and delicate or the social setting does not allow for talking about them openly. UNESCO has played a key role in promoting and developing the concept. A first workshop on TfD was held in Zimbabwe in 1970. Today many development agencies use the technique. More recently, TfD has been proven particularly useful for communicating, educating and informing on subjects such as combating HIV/ AIDS or promoting gender equality (UNESCO, 2007b).

**Theatre-for-development in Pointe-Noir, Congo<sup>28</sup>**

The community Base-Agip in Pointe-Noire is one of the most important fishing communities along the Congolese coast. It consists of some 3 000 inhabitants of which most are of Congolese origin but there is also a large community originally from Benin as well as immigrants from Angola, Ghana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sao Tome and Principe, and Togo.

The community started to work with SFLP in 2001 and an organization development process led to the establishment of an umbrella organization for Congolese and Beninese socio-professional groups operating at the landing site. In 2003, Base-Agip was selected to participate in the Programme’s Pilot Project on co-management<sup>22</sup>. In the participatory project planning process, which included among other things a gender study, HIV/AIDS was identified as a serious risk to the sustainability of local livelihoods.

In August 2004, the National AIDS Control Council (*Conseil national de la lutte contre la Sida – CNLS*) and the SFLP jointly conducted a socio-behavioural survey on local prostitution in the Base-Agip fishing community. The survey complemented a socio-anthropologic study conducted by CNLS earlier in the year in five major towns but that had not included fishing communities. The aim of the survey in Base-Agip was to better understand the different forms of transactional sex and reasons for prostitution in the community. This information was then used for designing – in participation with all stakeholders concerned – actions aiming at reducing the vulnerability of fishing people to HIV/AIDS.

To facilitate the data collection and create an environment that permitted community members to share their knowledge and experience with the researchers, the theatre media was used. It was incorporated in the survey process from the beginning and played an important role in all stages of the work. Using the TfD guidelines developed by Boal (1977) as the starting point, a methodology appropriate for local conditions was adopted. The socio-professional umbrella organization was partnering SFLP and

<sup>28</sup> This section is based on articles in the Liaison Bulletin No 17 & 18 and a SFLP working paper (SFLP/RSU, undated a).

CNLS in this endeavour. First, an *introductory theatre* play was put on by the help of two TfD trainers from Brazzaville presenting the overall objectives of the survey. This initial play facilitated a dialogue with the community about the planned work and helped explain the need for support from the community in answering questions and sharing information. The next step was an *inspirational theatre* play that presented the theme of the survey and solicited volunteers for the continuation of the plays. Ten women and five men volunteered for the new Base-Agip community drama group.

From this point on, the two TfD trainers became facilitators, letting the community drama group take the lead in script writing and the casting of the play. During fifteen days the group developed and rehearsed their play before making a public presentation as part of the *awareness-raising theatre* phase. The play recounted a story about a boat owner who is spending time in the bar with his favourite fishmonger mistress after a successful fishing trip. In exchange for sexual services, he has given her privileged access to his fish catch but does not want to use a condom. At the end of the play, he tests positive for HIV. The focus of the message of the play – conveyed by the person playing the doctor – was the importance of practicing safe sex and how to care for people suffering from AIDS. Immediately after the play, a facilitator encouraged the audience to reflect on and discuss what they had seen.

One day later, the play was put on again but this time for the authorities of Pointe-Noire, including representatives of the fisheries department and district administration, civil society and local community organizations. This time the audience was also given a presentation of the results of the socio-behavioural survey that had used as baseline information for the theatre preparations. The theatre play presentation by the drama group made an important impression on the authorities who realised the significance of the problem to the community. This subsequently led to the inclusion of Base-Agip in existing government programmes and specific initiatives for fighting HIV/AIDS in fishing communities at the national level.

The Base-Agip drama group remained in place also after having completed their task in relation to the prostitution survey. Hence, in addition to having assisted in the process of analysing and addressing HIV/AIDS in the community, a new vehicle for social communication had been created. The parties concerned – the fishing community itself, CNLS and SFLP – saw this as an opportunity for future interventions and the TfD approach was used successfully in the implementation of the subregional SFLP Pilot Project on co-management project, in which the Base-Agip community also participated.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

### ICTs in fishing communities

*Information and Communication Technologies*, or so called ICTs, can be defined as those “technologies that facilitate communication and the processing and transmission of information by electronic means” (Marker, McNamara and Wallace 2002, p. 4). A laptop with internet connection is one of the more obvious examples but also radios, televisions and phones are included in the definition and the range of ICTs is rapidly expanding to include a variety of technologies allowing people to collect, store and share information.

ICTs are most likely changing the lives of all people in the world, although at various levels. Fisheries communities are no exceptions as technologies are increasingly being used by businesses, governments, development agencies and individuals within the fisheries sector. A range of electronic technologies is used for fishing (e.g. GPS and fish finding devices) but new applications are also increasingly being used throughout other levels of the fisheries value chain. One example is the communication of market and price information by community loudspeakers or mobile phones. Mobile phones can also be used for mobile-enabled payment systems, allowing transmittances and

use of e-money. Computerising fish markets can lead to important efficiency gains – both in administration and in the market functions – and also improve government's access to information for monitoring (FAO, 2007). ICTs can as well contribute to Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) and data collection and thus support fisheries management.

In view of this rapid expansion, it would appear important to ensure that the ICT development is commensurate with poverty reduction and that the introduction and spread of new technologies in fisheries is directed at meeting the needs of the poor. The use of new technologies should be “integrated into participative, people-centred communications for development and knowledge sharing approaches” (FAO, 2007, p 3). Wisely used, ICT can contribute to not only income generation but also to reduction of vulnerabilities, and increased equity and social inclusion. Safety at sea can be improved by using ICTs for communicating weather forecasts and mobile phone and radios allow fishers to keep in contact with other boats and the shore. By involving communities directly in the production of radio and programmes and videos, ICTs become a powerful tool for communicating with a wider audience and for empowerment (FAO, 2007).

The SFLP used ICTs in a number of activities in support of pro-poor development and more responsible fisheries. In several countries (Congo, Gabon, Guinea and Mauritania), studies were carried out with regard to the possibilities of involving fishing communities in MCS. In Guinea, this idea was carried out successfully in practice and fishing communities were supported in creating a partnership with the National Fisheries Surveillance Centre (CNSP) and engaging in MCS in the artisanal fishing areas. In Cape Verde, the Programme assisted in introducing local radio for fishing communities.<sup>29</sup> In Burkina Faso and Mali, local radio stations were supported to become more participatory and relevant to fishing communities. SFLP also helped facilitate an expansion of the local mobile phone network to cover fishing communities in the Gambia and in Chad. Below follows brief summaries of the SFLP experiences of participatory MCS in Guinea and of community radio in Burkina Faso and Mali.

### **Participatory surveillance in Guinea**

In the fishing communities of Koukoudé, Bongolon and Matakang on the Guinean coast, a serious threat and obstacle to sustainable livelihoods was identified in the common incursion of industrial trawlers into the coastal fishing zone that was officially reserved for artisanal boats. The trawlers often destroyed the local small-scale fishers's net and damaged boats, in addition to exploiting their fishery resources. A study during the period 1995-1999 by the Boussoura National Fisheries Science Centre (CNSHB), showed that fish catches had been decreasing but that the industrial fishing fleet caught an increasingly large share (SFLP, undated).

In 2000, the fishing communities approached the CNSP, which is responsible for MCS in the Guinean coastal waters with the support of SFLP. The Centre – which also collaborates with CNSHB and the National Navy on surveillance issues – was rather sceptical at first to the idea that local fishers would get involved in monitoring and controlling their fishing areas with regard to illegal vessels. Nevertheless, with facilitation assistance from the Programme, a partnership between the communities and CNSP was established. The communities helped identify ‘informer fishers’, using education level as criteria. They were then trained by CNSP in the use of GPS, radios and mobile phones. This equipment was provided by SFLP for detecting trawlers at sea. A ‘logbook’ of infractions was also established where the date and time of the sighting, the name of the vessel and its position etc. were noted. In addition to the ICT

<sup>29</sup> SFLP assisted in establishing Radio Pedra Badejo, a community radio with participation of the fisheries sector and representatives of the fisheries association in the programming committee.

equipment, the informer fishers were equipped with life jackets, waterproof clothing and torches. If trawlers were spotted in the 10-mile coastal zone during their fishing trips, this was reported to one of the six CNSP bases along the coast (SFLP, undated, Diallo, Kourkouliotis and Breuil, 2003).

After two years, trawler incursions intercepted by CNSP in collaboration with local fishers had been decreased by 60 percent (SFLP, undated). CNSP patrols became fewer but better targeted. Fishers experienced considerably less damage to their nets and other equipment. There were also fewer accidents at sea caused by trawlers. The reported benefits for fishers also included increased incomes and improved community spirit and participation in community projects. However, there were still issues to be resolved and the system created at times jealousy among fishers since not enough equipment was available for everyone. Moreover, it was not possible to carry out night patrols although many incursions happened at night. Other problems reported included lack of communication and that fishers were not informed on the action that had been taken based on their reports. Nevertheless, the initiative has contributed to increased contacts between the community and national institutions that now recognise the communities as an important partner in the process of improving the national fisheries surveillance system (SFLP, undated, Diallo, Kourkouliotis and Breuil, 2003). In 2006, this role was legally recognised by the adoption of formal participatory surveillance guidelines (Njock, 2007).

### **Community radio in Burkina Faso and Mali**

Already before SFLP started its activities in 2004, the communities around Lake Bagré and Lake Kompienga in Burkina Faso and Lake Sélingué in Mali, had access to local radio stations. In addition to broadcasting news and other general programmes, these radio stations were used by the governments and aid agencies for passing on messages and communicating with the communities on important issues such as, for example, health and hygiene or how to fight locusts. The radio is a powerful tool in this respect. Communities tend to believe strongly in what they hear on the radio. Since the radio speakers are most often not known to them and hence do not appear to have any obvious self-interest in falsifying information or influencing the communities in one way or another, the radio is perceived as a reliable source of information (SFLP/RSU, undated b).

However, the existing radio stations did not specifically target fishing communities and programmes did not deal with issues related to fishing and associated activities. In relation to the subregional Pilot Project on inland fisheries co-management<sup>22</sup>, SFLP established partnerships with local radio stations in Bagré and in Sélingué with a view to change this situation. As a first step, the Programme carried out a review of the capacities and capabilities of the existing radio stations. This survey showed that the staff of the radio stations generally had a relatively low level of education and were not specialised in IC. In Burkina Faso, less than one percent had a high school certificate. Moreover, the local radio stations were usually operating with old and outdated equipment. In Mali, only one radio station (Wassoulou) had a telephone line and internet connection. This, obviously, constituted a great obstacle for interactive broadcasting. Eventually, based on their popularity with fishing communities and their willingness to produce more participatory radio programmes, four radio stations in Bagré and two in Sélingué were selected as partners. The production contracts that were established included support in the form of equipment and training in public broadcasting facilitation and audio production (SFLP/RSU, undated b).

The radio programmes developed were in both French and in local languages. Public broadcasts and round-table discussions were the most commonly used forms of products. The broadcast times were adapted to suit fishing people in accordance with their work schedules and broadcasts were generally announced in advance several

times in order to mobilise the listeners. In Burkina Faso, the programmes focused on good fishing practices and co-management. In Mali, the subject matters included the improvement of livelihoods, sustainable management of fishery resources and co-management, as well as illegal fishing.

The communities and local administrations were involved from the beginning in the planning of programme contents and messages, and in scheduling programmes. Fishermen, women processors and administration officials participated in round-table discussions and public broadcasts. This increased the communication and information flows at several levels and the visibility of the fisheries sector was increased. The radio programmes contributed to enhancing the communities' understanding of the need to protect the fishery resources and fish responsibly. Impact studies carried out by SFLP confirmed, through testimonies from community members, the communities' interest in radio programmes and in participating in their production. A woman processor explained, for example, that "one of the members of our group participated in a radio program and asked processors to follow her example, not to buy small fish and not to buy outside the weighing centres. The radio program got positive reactions from other women" (Holvoet 2007, p 104). Fishers also confirmed that the fact that one of theirs had talked on bad practices and fishing gear, motivated, informed and increased their awareness of the need to protect the resource (Holvoet, 2007). This may sound as a contradiction to what was said above on the influence of anonymity on communities' belief in radio messages but was nevertheless the experience of the Programme. The fact that the knowledge on behalf of radio station staff with regard to fisheries was considerably improved and relationships based on a certain level of complicity between them and the fishing communities were often established, probably influenced this aspect.

The radio programs were also used to inform the communities on microfinance, organizational development and diversification of income generating activities. As a result of hearing the radio programmes, communities in Mali created groups and organizations in order to have access to credit and were undertaking alternative economic activities such as vegetable gardening.

At the level of the institutions and macro-level actors, the impact studies documented the fact that radio programs had had a positive influence on the openness of the administration, at national, regional and local level, to cooperate with the fisheries communities. As stated in Holvoet (2007, p 105) "the radio programs have given a value to fisheries and given more consideration for the profession". Representatives of local socio-professional organizations that had been associated with the programmes and participated in public discussions were listened to and had easier access to representatives of the administration. The participation of fisheries communities in local radio programming made an important contribution to the integration of the communities in mainstream development. The participatory radio programs increased the feeling of ownership of the local development by the fisheries communities (Holvoet, 2007).

## **COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION APPROACHES FOR THE FUTURE**

The SFLP operated in a large number of countries and locations, and implemented a complex integrated approach to practical research. The Programme covered a great variety of issues that were all critical for succeeding in addressing sustainable fisheries management in a poverty context. While the Programme was successful in some IC areas, e.g. in applying appropriate approaches at the local level, other aspects were less well covered. Thus, an important lesson at this overall level of development programme planning is that a comprehensive and coherent communication strategy needs to be incorporated from the very beginning of implementation of such an endeavour. The strategy needs to link monitoring with plans for communication

outputs and outcomes, and appropriate human and financial resources need to be included in programme budgets. It would appear particularly important to give thought to the integration of IEC in processes that are expected to lead to changes in PIP (Holvoet, 2007).

Through providing institutional support and implementing participatory communication methods in the field, the Programme was effective in enhancing the IC capacities of community and partner organizations contributing to outcomes at both micro and macro levels. However, the Programme experienced that communication is not always automatic. Many times considerable thought and effort has to go into defining and developing the right IC tools. On the other hand, a situation that appears to be at an impasse can sometimes be turned around with the help of the right approach and support. The main lessons learned from the TfD experience in Congo included the recognition of the importance of creating an environment of trust and complicity in order to allow for an analysis of sensitive issues such as sexual behaviour in the context of HIV/AIDS. The experience showed that by finding and adapting an appropriate communication tool – in this case the TfD – it is possible to overcome possible initial obstacles of distrust and misunderstandings, and engage the community in a local and widely shared problem. As a facilitator in such a process, it is essential to ensure that gender aspects are considered and that all socio-professional groups are included in the exercise, something that may require negotiation and lobbying.

The continuing evolution of ICTs offers an impressive range of possible technical solutions that can be used in development. It is however important to see ICTs as one solution, among possibly many others, and not introduce advanced ICTs indiscriminately. The introduction of new technologies will require training and support and there is a need to ensure that their use is appropriate in the context of equitable development and poverty reduction. The experience in Guinea with community participation in MCS is an example of how ICTs can be used for the benefit of both poverty alleviation and improved fisheries management. The initiative had many important outcomes, including increased social cohesion and community empowerment, and the creation of micro-macro linkages influencing PIP.

The success of the community radios in Burkina Faso and Mali showed how existing communication technologies can be made more effective with IEC support. Interactive programmes with the participation of community members and resource persons fostered new relationships and communication channels. The establishment of partnerships between the radio, specialised organizations and the fisheries communities contributed to this success. Partnerships facilitate the development and dissemination of programs and ensure continuity over time. SFLP contributed to capacity building of the radio stations and their staff and increased their awareness and knowledge of the fisheries sector (Holvoet, 2007).

In conclusion, it would appear that – in spite of the shortcomings of SFLP's overall communication strategy framework – the Programme has been successful in implementing IEC with lasting results visible in the form of reinforced institutional capacities and capabilities. Important experience in using appropriate communication methods in the context of projects addressing difficult issues was also gained. SFLP's interventions have in several cases led to sustainable changes in attitudes, policies and processes for the benefit of fishing communities. While it is not possible to document the magnitude of the impact of the interventions and their immediate results on fishing community livelihoods, it seems beyond doubt that there have been positive effects at the local level and that the attention given to IC aspects has contributed to poverty reduction and responsible fisheries.

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## 9. Responding to HIV and AIDS in fishing communities: case studies from Benin and Congo

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### INTRODUCTION

The HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to ravage the African continent – as well as many other parts of the world – in spite of medical advances and increased international and local attention to the issue. Globally, an estimated 33.2 million people were living with HIV in 2007. 22.5 million of these live in subSaharan Africa, which is “the most seriously affected region, with AIDS remaining the leading cause of death” (UNAIDS, 2007, p. 4)

Recent studies show that fisheries communities in many developing countries frequently suffer from HIV prevalence rates many times higher than those of the general population. Most studies suggesting high seroprevalence among fishing people refer to fishermen but it is acknowledged that both men and women, working together in related fish catching, processing and trading activities, are vulnerable (Allison and Seeley, 2004; Kissling *et al.*, 2005).

This vulnerability is considered to be related to the way fishing and fish trade activities are carried out and organised. It has been suggested that the particular dynamics of the sector make a number of supposed HIV/AIDS risk factors come together in some fisheries communities. Fishers are largely found to be in the age group of 15 to 35 years, an age group considered to be most vulnerable to HIV infection. Fishers are also often mobile or migratory which may change their sexual behaviour as they are away from more constrained home norms, and fishing is a high-risk occupation which could contribute to an attitude of risk denial. Having multiple sexual partners is sometimes seen as a sign of masculinity and alcohol consumption can be common, factors that also contribute to increased HIV/AIDS vulnerability. Moreover, fisheries communities have in many cases limited access to health services and the necessary prevention, treatment and mitigation measures are often missing or not adequate (Kissling *et al.*, 2005). However, it should be pointed out that these explanations as to why a high-risk subculture exists in some fishing communities are generalisations and that the HIV/AIDS risk factors are “complex and embedded in the economic, social and cultural contexts in which fisherfolk pursue their livelihoods” (Allison and Seeley, 2004, p. 223).

While HIV/AIDS has disastrous effects on economic growth and on the lives and livelihoods of affected people in general, high HIV rates also have particular implications for fisheries management and development. The 2006 report on the State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (FAO, 2007) stresses that the issue of HIV and AIDS in fishing communities is not just a public health issue but also a fisheries development and management concern. The predicted impact on fisheries is first at individual household level as it reduces labour, both productive and reproductive and influences the productive capacity of the household. Less fishery income means also less input for investment in other income-generating activities (IGAs), and reduction of access to food. Often the next stage in an AIDS-affected household is the depletion of savings and sale of productive assets, resulting in increased vulnerability and

potentially leading to destitution. At the community and sectoral levels impacts are largely undocumented but when fishers, fish processors and fishery managers become ill it reduces management capacity, productivity and efficiency. Overall impacts point to an increased incidence of poverty and reduced likelihood of sustainable exploitation of resources whereby responsible fishing targets may be compromised (FAO, 2007)

FAO has recently been making efforts to bring agriculture and food security to the centre of the fight against HIV and AIDS. The FAO approved in 2004 a Priority Area for Interdisciplinary Action (PAIA) on AIDS to strengthen the intra and inter agency collaboration in responding to AIDS. In particular through the work of SFLP and its links to the PAIA, FAO has also been addressing HIV/AIDS in fisheries. However, generally, initiatives addressing HIV/AIDS specifically in the fisheries sector have been relatively few and have worked in isolation from national and global support and policies until recently. Moreover, many projects based their interventions on methodologies developed for farming or urban communities. Fortunately, this situation is changing and the need to consider fishing communities in policies and actions is increasingly being recognised by governments, international agencies and NGOs (FAO, 2007). SFLP contributed to this process by its work in West and Central Africa, particularly in Benin and Congo. In Africa, most studies on HIV/AIDS in fishing communities have focused on Lake Victoria where the disease was first discovered (Allison and Seeley, 2004). By applying the sustainable livelihoods approach, SFLP has brought new knowledge about HIV/AIDS in fishing communities in coastal and continental West and Central Africa.

This chapter reviews SFLP's work of identifying and addressing the prevalence of HIV in fishing communities in Benin and Congo. A brief overview of the subregional context in which HIV/AIDS exist is given and some of the main vulnerability factors relevant to fishing communities are pointed out. The chapter thereafter presents the approach applied by SFLP and the important institutional linkages, information dissemination and participatory processes that are important in designing and implementing effective responses to the threat to sustainable livelihoods and responsible fisheries that HIV/AIDS constitutes.

### **HIV/AIDS IN FISHING COMMUNITIES: VULNERABILITY FACTORS**

Fishing communities have been identified as particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, especially in low and middle-income countries where overall HIV seroprevalence rates are high. The links between ill-health and poverty are well known and, as mentioned in the introduction above, a number of factors related to the overall poverty context in fishing communities explain this situation, e.g.:

- HIV and AIDS tend to be highest where medical services are inaccessible. Lack of access to prevention advice and untreated sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) can lead to higher transmission rates.
- HIV and AIDS tend to be higher where gender relations are highly unequal and where there are clear gender divisions of labour. This is the context in which 'transactional sex' often takes place.
- Social marginalization, poverty and vulnerability often lead to discounting the future and, among marginalized men, to hypermasculinity. It can also lead to the recourse to drugs and alcohol as means of coping, which – in turn – can lead to higher-risk decisions around unprotected sex and to increased levels of violence, including sexual violence against women.
- Where people face other risks due to poverty, vulnerability or a risky occupation (such as mining, fishing and logging), or when people live in a generally precarious situation (e.g. in a refugee camp or an inner-city gang environment) risks of HIV may be discounted, or risk-confrontation and hypermasculinity may be cultural responses, including having multiple sexual partners.

## BOX 10

**Arguments presented by the SFLP National Coordination Unit (NCU) of Congo to justify the need for a KAP study and integrated HIV/AIDS prevention in its sustainable livelihoods development activities**

“HIV/AIDS acts on the society in the same way it acts on the human organism. The virus destroys the different components of the society that can be organized to push socio-economic development process forward. Fishing communities are no exceptions. Living in areas with high migratory trends, they are particularly vulnerable to the epidemic.

The following factors can explain the particular vulnerability of fishing communities:

- Interactions between mobile populations (traders, both male and female, agents of law and order, workers on mission, transit travellers visiting for family reasons, professional sex workers) and sedentary populations (fishing communities).
- The existence of big markets in the communities along the Congo river, which encourages the movement of people between the two Congos.
- The fact that some fishing communities along the Congo river play host to refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda and Central African Republic.
- Lack of response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic invasion in the community.

In addition to these factors, there are the insecure living conditions of fishers. The majority of small-scale coastal fishers are foreigners made up of immigrants from West Africa, especially Benin. The latter live in makeshift houses and maintain a promiscuous lifestyle. Inland fishers are mainly indigenes living along the DRC border. In some communities, floods force the fishers to vacate their houses to live in camps.

Small-scale fisheries play an important role in the economy of Congo and in poverty reduction. If this sector were to develop, the development strategies would have to integrate HIV/AIDS control, which is the greatest threat to the health of the stakeholders. HIV/AIDS can cancel out all the efforts aimed at improving the livelihoods of fisheries-dependent populations, and hinder the sustainable development of the sector.”

*Source:* SFLP HIV/AIDS prevention in fishing communities project document (February 2003), quoted in Heidrich, 2004.

- Fishing communities are often mobile and migratory, a lifestyle that may impact on sexual behaviour and contribute to higher risk taking.(Allison and Seeley, 2004; Kissling *et al.*, 2005)

While the above list is a general summary of compromising factors often found in fishing communities, it is not applicable to all fishing communities and local situations are often complex. Nevertheless, in the main areas of SFLP's work in Benin and in Congo several of the explanatory factors appeared to be validated. As an example, the factors justifying the undertaking of Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) studies on HIV/AIDS in the Congolese fishing communities are summarized in Box 10.

SFLP found that migration and mobility were particularly important factors contributing to high risk and susceptibility of HIV/AIDS infection in the West and Central African context. For many fishing people in the region, migration is an important livelihood strategy. This is particularly true for fishers although other socio-professional groups also migrate although generally to a lesser extent (see Table 10).

Though the statistics on migration in fisheries often refer to male actors it is known that an important number of female members of households are migrating.

TABLE 10  
Importance of employment and migration in the fisheries sector

Country	Number of fishers and fish workers (direct and indirect employment)	Proportion who are migrants
Benin	600 000 jobs in marine and continental fisheries 15% of active population	47 % of the marine fishers are migrants
Cameroon	200 000 employed of which 24 136 are coastal fishers	83 % of the coastal fishers are migrants (majority from Nigeria)
Congo	59 418 jobs of which 2 335 in marine fisheries (2002) 6.8% of the active population (2002)	44% of the marine fishers are migrants
Gabon	8 202 employed of which 4 298 in marine fisheries	80% of the marine fishers are migrants

Sources: Holvoet, 2006 (Benin), Ngok, Djamen and Jiongo, 2005, and Likeng, 2006 (Cameroon), SFLP, 2005 (Congo), and Mabounda, Ondo Megne and Rerambyath, 2005 (Gabon).

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) states in its 2002 fact sheet that women account for 50 percent of migrants and women are increasingly migrating as individuals rather than as dependants of other family members (IOM, 2002). In fisheries it is probably less common that women migrate as individuals but when they do, women are often particularly vulnerable. There are also exceptions; in inland fishing communities surveyed by SFLP in Benin women were found to be very mobile, going to the market in Cotonou as well as to markets in neighbouring countries to sell their fish and pursue business opportunities (Atahouet, 2004). Women may be at risk of unsafe sex due to a culturally defined lack of negotiation power in sex, exposed to transactional sex due to limited access to resources and services and have a weak negotiation position in their professional roles – e.g. as traders or processors when buying fish from fishers – because of prevailing ideas of femininity and masculinity.

One of the common issues linked to migration and mobility is that it puts those left behind in risk situations and those returning had, because of less social control, more risk for HIV infection. The Inter-Agency Group on AIDS stated that mobile populations, including refugees and labour migrants, may be more likely to have unsafe sex due to: “isolation resulting from stigma, discrimination and differences in languages and cultures; separation from regular sexual partners; desire for intimacy, comfort and pleasure in a stressful environment; sense of anonymity; power dynamics in buying or selling sex; and lack of access to health and social services, information and condoms” (IAAG, 2004, pp 3,7).

It is also important to understand that hot spots or places of high prevalence rates are in this way in contact with zones where prevalence rates are low. Migrants from West Africa move to Southern and Central African countries where higher prevalence rates prevail, e.g. in Benin it was found that youths migrating to Gabon, where the estimated prevalence rate for the age group of 15–49 is several times higher than in Benin, returned for the New Year festivities, had increased risk of infection.

SFLP experiences in community surveys have documented the different types of migration and mobility and the need to distinguish the different risks for HIV infection. AIDS prevention, care and treatment in fisheries will thus need to include migrating and the non-migrating members of households with attention to gender issues in sexuality and with regard to the professional roles of men and women in the fishery product value chain.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> A broader overview on migration is presented in Chapter 6.

## SFLP WORK IN BENIN AND CONGO

### Scope and general approach

SFLP's work on HIV/AIDS took place mainly in Benin and Congo. The two countries both host important migrant fisher populations and many actors in the fisheries sector are mobile. The HIV prevalence rate has been estimated at 1.8 percent in Benin and 5.3 percent in Congo (national averages 2005; UNAIDS, 2006).

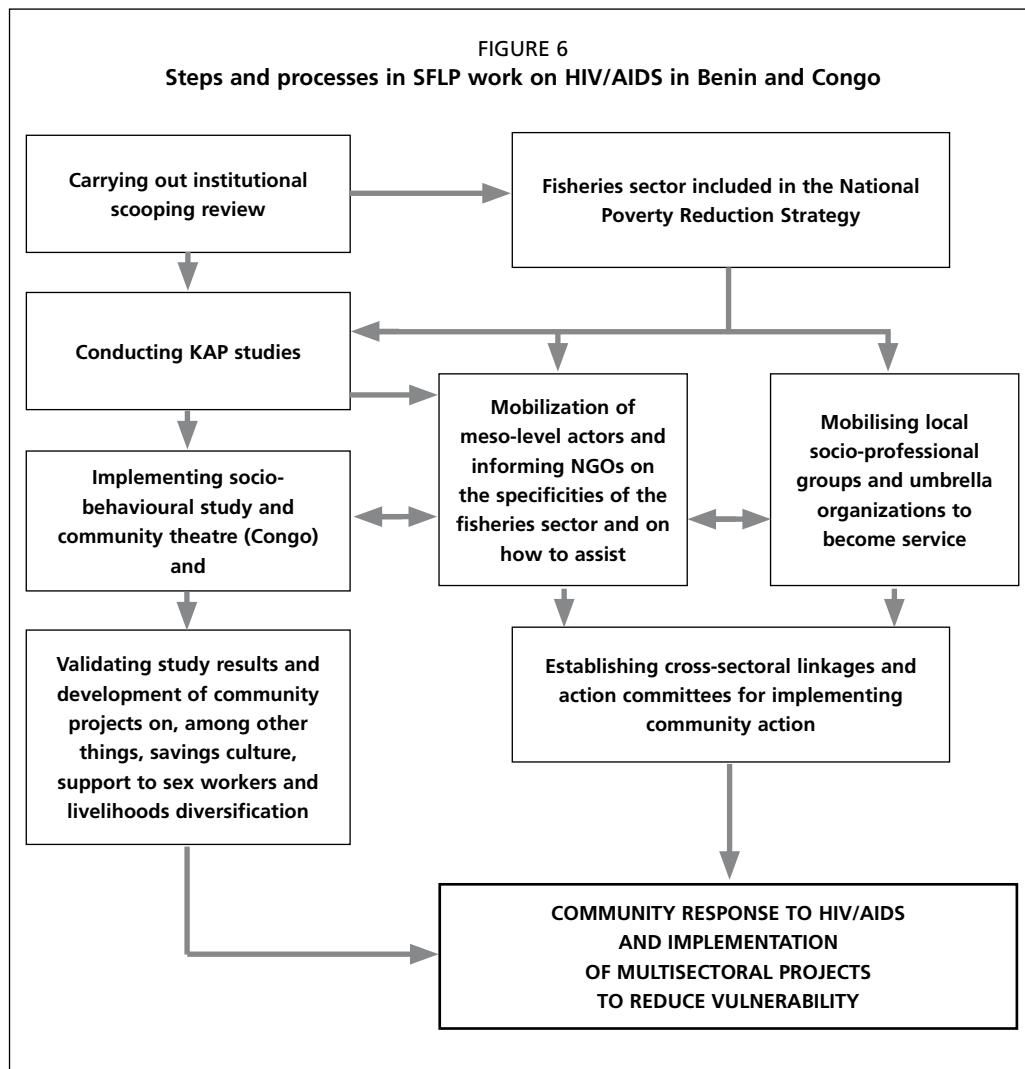
In Benin, four fishing villages initially participated in the Programme's activities, two where lagoon fishing is practiced – Kétonou (Ouémé Department) and So-Zounko (Atlantique Department) – and two coastal fishing villages; Ayiguinnou (Mono Department) and Hio (Atlantique Department). The total population of these four villages is about 18 000 people. In Congo, the Programme started its interventions in Makotipoko fishing community on the Congo River, and in Bas-Kouilou and Base-Agip (Pointe-Noire) on the Congolese coast. In Makotipoko, there is a large regional fish market visited by thousands of people from Gabon, the Democratic Republic of Congo and other countries of the region. Pointe-Noire is the economic capital of Congo and Base-Agip is the most important fishing community on the Congolese coast with 3 000 inhabitants. In both countries, the number of participating communities increased over time as the Programme expanded its activities in collaboration with its partners (Atahouet, 2004; Heidrich, 2004).

The high degree of migration and mobility of fishing communities in Benin and Congo was a reason for SFLP to select to work in the two countries in selected communities. This situation required particular attention to institutional linkages and active participation of community members and stakeholders. SFLP's approach was based on the following considerations:

- Ownership by local and national partners is required for ensuring long-term support leading to sustainable results. Fisheries departments and relevant stakeholder organizations have to be involved from the start of the process.
- A solid information and knowledge base is needed to inform the process. A first set of data is needed early on for successful lobbying for support and partnerships among lead organizations.
- The process needs to be participatory with communities as active partners. Fisheries specific and locally appropriate responses to HIV/AIDS should be identified together with those most at risk. Vulnerable groups need to be empowered to actively take part in prevention, treatment and care, and mitigation measures.
- Interventions should not only focus on health but be multisectoral aiming at reducing vulnerability factors of those most at risk.

The main steps and components of the work carried out by the Programme to help establish a community response to HIV/AIDS are schematically depicted Figure 6 and can be summarized as follows:

- Brief scoping review of current situation and institutional set-up.
- Discussions with macro-level partners to ensure support.
- Carrying out of base line surveys (KAP studies).
- Mobilisation of meso-level actors to engage with fishing communities.
- Engaging with community based umbrella socio-professional organizations to take an active part in activity planning and implementation.
- Awareness raising on the specificities of the fisheries sector and training in PRA/SLA techniques for NGOs.
- Conduct of participatory diagnostic survey and triangulation meetings (*Benin*) and socio-behavioural study through Theatre-for-development (TfD) (*Congo*).
- Validation of study results and elaboration of community action plans.
- Establishment of cross-sectoral linkages and mechanisms for implementing community action plans.



Source: Adopted from Holvoet, 2006.

The process followed by the Programme in the two countries of intervention was somewhat different. The flow of information between the micro- and macro-levels was limited at the beginning of the activities in Benin but were strengthened over time with the help of an information and communication strategy. TfD was a major component of the participatory process in Congo while triangulation was used for the formulation of community action plans in Benin.

These key cross-cutting components of the process, i.e. institutional linkages and information, and participation and communication – through triangulation in Benin and TfD in Congo – are described in further detail below.

### Developing institutional linkages and the importance of information

At the inception phase of its work on HIV/AIDS in the region, SFLP undertook a brief institutional analysis in Benin, Congo and Cameroon<sup>31</sup> and found a general lack of visibility of the fisheries sector in national development policies and strategies. Together with other apparent institutional blockages, this was found to be a possible explanation as to why fishing communities were not specifically targeted for HIV/AIDS

<sup>31</sup> As mentioned above, SFLP decided subsequently to focus its work on Congo and Benin because of the important migration traditions between the two countries. Certain activities were however carried out by SFLP and its partners in Cameroon and Nigeria but will not be further described in this chapter.

TABLE 11

## Summary of main findings of the KAP studies conducted in Benin and Congo

	Benin KAP study	Congo KAP study
Use of condoms	9% of respondents stated to always use condom. 37% do not use condom. 12% sometimes use condom. 1% use condom if asked by partner. 41% gave no answer.	Base-Agip: 61% of respondents stated to always use condom 36% do not use condom. 3% gave no answer Makotipoko: 52% always use condom. 40% do not use condom. 8% gave no answer.
Multiple partners	49% of respondents stated to agree with the habit of having multiple partners. 51% did not agree.	38% of respondents stated to agree with the habit of having multiple partners 62% did not agree.
Sex with professional sex workers	20% of respondents stated to have had sex with professional sex workers. 63% had never had sex with a sex worker. 17% gave no answer.	44% of respondents stated to have had sex with professional sex workers. 56% gave no answer.

Sources: Atahouet, 2005 (Benin); Mboussou, 2003 (Congo)

interventions and the fisheries sector not included in national HIV/AIDS responses. The SFLP interventions in Benin and Congo hence started with consultations at macro level. This involved key stakeholders such as the National AIDS Control Council (*Conseil national de la lutte contre la Sida – CNLS*) in Congo, the Global Fund, UNAIDS, and representatives of projects such as the World Bank financed Multisector HIV/AIDS Project (MSP) and the subregional Congo, Oubangui and Chari River Basin Initiative (World Bank funded interagency collaboration). The aim of these meetings was to create partnerships and to obtain commitment to the fisheries sector in order to ensure the longer-term continuation of HIV/AIDS prevention and control actions and funding for follow-up activities based on the SFLP work and base line studies.

Having obtained initial commitments for the process at the macro level, community mobilisation and KAP studies were carried out to assess the level of knowledge, attitudes and practices within the participating communities with regard to HIV/AIDS. In Benin, the study was carried out in partnership with the MSP and in Congo in close collaboration with the CNLS. The studies showed that while most fishing communities had heard about HIV/AIDS and had some knowledge of how the disease spreads, the awareness was generally far from sufficient to impact on their lifestyle and sexual practices (Atahouet, 2004). A brief overview of the results of the KAP studies is given in Table 11.

All the researchers involved in the KAP studies agreed that urgent action was needed to address HIV/AIDS in fishing communities and to ensure the integration of fisheries in national HIV/AIDS responses. After having presented and discussed the results of the KAP studies with key stakeholders, diagnostic surveys and participatory action planning were embarked upon in the Programme intervention sites (see also the sections on triangulation in Benin and TfD in Congo below). These activities were implemented in close collaboration with the SFLP partners, MSP in Benin and CNLS in Congo, and NGOs and socio-professional organizations selected in consultation with the macro level partners. In the case of Congo, the fisheries umbrella organizations had been involved from the beginning and became a direct partner of the CNLS in the continuation of the work. The participating NGOs and organizations were trained in

analysis of vulnerability and policies, institutions and processes (PIP). They were also sensitised with regard to the fisheries specific HIV/AIDS context.

Communication activities were also conducted to inform a larger number of actors on the findings of the SFLP studies. The outcome of the surveys resulted in the publication of a training manual on planning HIV/AIDS control initiatives in fisheries communities. The production of this training manual was part of an information, education and communication (IEC) strategy on HIV/AIDS that the fisheries department in Benin developed. Compared to existing diagnostic material used by NGOs working with HIV/AIDS response in Benin, the new SFLP supported training material added migration, mobility and marketing analysis and profiling tools to better capture the risk situations relevant to fishing communities. The framework for formulation of community action plans also included tools for ranking risks and vulnerability factors according to subgroups within fisheries with special consideration given to gender issues and the roles of young girls, boys and widows. The English version of this manual has been tested by consultants in Malawi and its use was planned in Kenya, Cameroon and Nigeria at the time of the completion of the Programme.<sup>32</sup>

In addition, advocacy materials were prepared in collaboration with PAIA members in FAO headquarters and then used to mobilize national level HIV/AIDS response agency support to the fisheries sector in other partner countries as well, notably in Gabon, Mauritania, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea.<sup>33</sup>

The activities conducted under the SFLP were focused on building and strengthening micro, meso and macro linkages. This helped to pave the way for SFLP and its partners to access and secure funding for HIV/AIDS control activities in other communities as well. In Congo the HIV/AIDS control initiatives was initially initiated in only three fishing communities, but soon it was implemented in 30 other fishing communities when funding increased. In Benin, seven additional community action plans were funded and four NGOs begun to provide support to fisheries communities, where initially no such cohesion had existed.

In Congo, it was observed that the response of the CNLS to HIV/AIDS control initiatives was prompt and largely based on the results of the KAP studies and the socio behavioural studies. This partnership and engagement at the macro level was a key to the success of the interventions. While SFLP steered the processes, admittedly it was the key players such as CNLS that influenced the outcome of the lobbying in favour of the fisheries sector. The explanations as to why CNLS could act so quickly on the needs of the fisheries sector include:

- CNLS has in each of the thirteen ministries an AIDS control unit with a clearly defined position in the ministry and budgetary allocation.
- CNLS is decentralised and at the departmental level, the councils are empowered to organise participatory planning exercises
- Special importance has been placed by CNLS on supporting community response activities and 40 percent of its funds are earmarked for this type of interventions. (Mboussou, 2004a).

At the meso level, it was observed that the main challenges were to motivate actors to move away from standard procedures and not to apply planning as it was undertaken in other rural-non fisheries communities. The answer to this was the use of triangulation and communication approaches.

### **Triangulation intervention through community meeting approach in Benin**

In Benin, the follow-up activities after the KAP study involved the triangulation process. Triangulation sessions are technical meetings where results of fieldwork is presented,

<sup>32</sup> The document Planning Guide Fisheries and HIV/AIDS is available at [www.sflp.org/fr/007/sida/guide\\_sida.htm](http://www.sflp.org/fr/007/sida/guide_sida.htm) (French version only).

<sup>33</sup> See national reports of the SFLP Pilot Projects available at [www.sflp.org](http://www.sflp.org).

discussed and analysed from different angles. This methodology was used in Benin for the development of community action plans. The process involved various actors from the fisheries department, civil society, fisheries umbrella organizations, health sector officers and, depending on the context, also leaders from the co-management committee and managers of microfinance institutions (MFIs).

The community action plans developed were largely made up of responses to risk situations that had been identified during the diagnostic survey, i.e. the KAP study. Examples of prevention, control, care and treatment activities include:

- sensitization activities for different subgroups of the communities on different themes specific to the fisheries sector;
- analysis and reflection meetings with regard to the existing relationships between high risk groups and what the best responses would be;
- special sensitization activities during festive periods;
- seasonal awareness raising for immigrants and emigrants;
- first aid training on how to treat wounds during fishing or fish-processing activities and education on the risks of HIV/AIDS contamination during fishing activities;
- training of peer educators on HIV/AIDS themes specific to the fisheries sector;
- social marketing of condoms and installation of new selling points;
- organization of voluntary testing followed by counseling; and
- organization of assistance from specialized centres for care and “community micro funds” to assist in access to treatment;

(APHEDD, 2005; Global Alternative, 2005; OCSED, 2005)

The community action plans were then implemented by a village steering committee, comprising women and men from different socio economic and socio-professional groups and including youths. The committee also included resource persons, e.g. a local fisheries officer, a health officer from the local health centre and the village head. SFLP's partner NGOs played a central role in training and empowering committee members to manage their financial operation by maintaining petty cash book, bank book, activity monitoring book and minutes' book.

The community action plans led to some positive outcomes, mainly (i) a higher knowledge level of all socio professional groups on STDs, HIV and AIDS and increased awareness on risks and how to respond; (ii) the availability of peer educators to all socio professional groups; (iii) the increased sales of condoms and higher number of selling points, (iv) an important number of voluntary testing and (v) access to care and treatment and to the community fund for those who tested positive.

At the national level there was increased awareness of the problems faced by the fishing communities and the need for a multisectoral response taking into account the vulnerability factors of the sector and its actors.

### **Communication intervention through Theatre-for-development (TfD) approach in Congo**

In Base-Agip, Congo, TfD was used as a main tool of communication, both at the community level and to pass messages on from the community to meso and macro stakeholders. The theatre was a way of making sure that all socio-professional groups could be active participants in the research and planning. It was also viewed as an important communication medium to facilitate data collection and to create an environment that permitted community members to share their knowledge and experience with the researchers. TfD was also a means of achieving ownership of the results by the community and the basis for planning actions for community response.

The subject of the first and main TfD exercise in Base-Agip was a socio-behavioural study, carried out in 2004, that aimed at understanding the typology and organizational structure surrounding prostitution. This information was deemed a prerequisite by the

CNLS and the fisheries department to formulating any conclusive action that could reduce the vulnerability of HIV infection among community members. The study concerned the community as a whole because it involved all levels of stakeholders, including professional sex workers, occasional prostitutes, their customers, other members of the community, as well as representatives of the administration. The community drama acted out scenes depicting the results of each stage of the study as it progressed. The theatre was also presented to surrounding communities and improved in brainstorming sessions the awareness on the dynamics of prostitution, HIV/AIDS, the community's risk factors, and strategies for addressing it.<sup>34</sup>

The socio-behavioural study helped identifying a typology of women providing professional sex<sup>35</sup> services in Base-Agip: (i) sex workers who live in Base-Agip and receive customers at home, (ii) the free girls called "brothels" living in Base-Agip, (iii) the young girls of Base-Agip who are "living like white people"; and (iv) mobile prostitutes working, but not living in Base-Agip. Each of the groups has different characteristics in terms of degree of risk taken, motive for their activity and their type of clients. A summary is presented in Table 12.

The different types of sex workers exhibit different patterns with regard to how they move between the town, Pointe Noire, and the harbour in Base-Agip and also how they link different risk situations with different type of clients of different socio economic status. The rich and poor clients from within the fishing community and outside the wealthier "petrol sector employees and wealthy Congolese living in town" but also poorer groups in town, are linked. Hot spots in the harbour are linked with hot spots in town. The socio-behavioural study also revealed that the risk may vary according to the season for different socio-professional groups but all categories are at risk: boat-owners, crew, fishmongers and processors (Mboussou, 2004b). Box 11 presents some examples of situations in which transactional sex was found to take place.

Based on the improved knowledge of local conditions and structure of the professional sex worker sector, CNLS could intensify its interventions in the harbour and fund projects specifically addressing the risk situations and needs of professional sex workers and female fishmongers. The CNLS manual for training peer educators was revised and included specific risk situations for each socio-professional group and for the different groups of sex workers.

In addition to providing valuable inputs for HIV/AIDS control action plans, the socio-behavioural study also gave recommendations with regard to how to address vulnerability among high-risk groups. An SFLP study on the impact at household level of HIV/AIDS and other chronic illnesses that was undertaken in this context showed how the increased burden of both direct and indirect cost for care can lead to destitution of households' productive assets. The study documented how even relatively well-off families, having average monthly incomes of FCFA 300 000<sup>36</sup> and owning gear, boat and motor, could end up without productive assets as a immediate effect of costs for treatments. Loss of income due to illness and treatment costs obviously increases the vulnerability of households requiring support for finding sustainable coping mechanisms (Mboussou and CLNS, 2006).

In 2006, SFLP supported livelihoods diversification for highly vulnerable households. SFLP worked with the CNLS and specialised NGOs to mobilise communities to take responsibility for a participatory analysis of vulnerability and to assist in diversifying livelihoods. A multisectoral support group were created including the participation of the local HIV/AIDS action committee, NGOs and representatives from the agriculture extension services, a MFI, the community health service and the fisheries department.

<sup>34</sup> Chapter 8 gives a more detailed description of the TfD process in Base-Agip.

<sup>35</sup> Professional sex work is defined as women who provide sex services in exchange of money.

<sup>36</sup> FCFA 300 000 = US\$600 (2006).

TABLE 12  
Typology of women providing professional sex in Base-Agip, Congo

Category	Risks taken	Type of clients	Motive
Sex workers receiving customers at home and living in Base-Agip. Often fish processors.	Condoms available but can agree to unsafe sex with regular partners	Two or three regular partners, generally among boat owners and fishers.	Guaranteeing access to fish. Can offer services on credit and partners sometimes pay with fish they bring.
Free girls called 'brothels' <sup>1</sup> . Often young (under 30) single mothers and who not consider themselves prostitutes.	Tend not to use condoms.	Very different types and can be introduced into the night clubs and bars in Pointe Noire by their friends	Offer their sexual services for survival.
Young girls " living like white people".	Usually practise safe sex but in a few cases do have unprotected sex with partners who pay more.	Hang around night clubs and bars in Pointe Noire and offer services at higher prices to non-locals. May keep a partner within the fishing community to keep up the façade.	Attracted by the living standards of some groups (and "white people") in Pointe-Noire.
Mobile sex workers in Base-Agip	Practice both safe and unprotected sex	Customers in Base-Agip especially during the good fishing season Work in mini hotels in Pointe Noire	Income generation.

Source: Mboussou, 2004b.

With the support of SFLP and sometimes in partnership with specialised NGOs, MFIs supported livelihoods diversification of highly vulnerable groups.

With regard to TfD as a communication tool and a means for community mobilisation, there were several notable outcomes from the theatre intervention in Base-Agip:

- A fishing community was mobilized to face the challenges posed by prostitution and the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in their community;
- A community drama group was established either to dramatize other problems that could endanger the community, or to become a lobby group that can draw the attention of decision-makers to the aspirations of the community;
- The representatives of local policy-making bodies and institutions were informed and sensitized on the characteristics of prostitution in the fishing communities of Base-Agip and in Pointe Noire;
- The repertoire of the community response of CNLS and the SFLP was enriched with regard to how to conduct an awareness-raising survey (the role of TfD, the relationship between researchers and their respondents, the role of dialogue, etc.);
- Many radio and television programmes and press releases were produced on the problem of prostitution and HIV/AIDS in the fishing community;
- The community reached a new point of departure in its search for alternatives, especially through livelihoods diversification and a gender-sensitive micro-finance system.
- (Heidrich, 2004)

#### FUTURE PREVENTION, CARE, TREATMENT AND MITIGATION

The SFLP experience showed the importance of working through partnerships and engaging both lead organizations at the national level and communities in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The pandemic is not only a local issue but a regional one because of the mobility and migration of people. Fishing communities are especially at risk

## BOX 11

**Testimonies on "Transactional sex and professional sex services" in Base-Agip (Congo)**

**Boat-owners' vulnerability results from their privileged access to the resource:** during the “bad fishing” seasons, fish becomes very scarce and demand becomes higher than supply. Boat-owners favour some special customers over others in the supply of fish. These are either their wives or their mistresses.

*“... I am in charge of collecting money for my master. Sometimes, when I get to a woman who has bought fish, she may say that she has already paid my master. What that means is that, you know... If you try to get too many details about the transaction, your master may threaten to sack you ...”* (O., 36-year-old fisherman).

**Fishers or crew** are in contrast to the boat-owners, under greater risk during “good fishing seasons”. The fishermen are very much aware of the fact that the women exchanging sex with them, meet several of them, but very few protect themselves. “... *When we share out our money after a fishing expedition, I sometimes make 30 000 francs in one day. I give my family 10 000 francs and I pocket the rest of the money for enjoying myself. After drinking, I check out one or two “brothels” before going back home...*” (L., 28-year-old fisherman).

Sex workers and fishermen can also meet on the beach: Some fishermen fall into the trap of “brothels” at the beach. “...*some women here organize themselves to create problems for fishermen ... After sex, the woman will ask for 50 000 or 200 000 francs. The next thing, you will see the police and that means we have to give them the amount they ask for. The two obviously share the loot later ...*” (R., 38-year-old fisherman).

**Women fish processors** have their own peculiar problems with the sale of fish. To earn more, some sell their fish on credit to some credible business enterprises in Pointe-Noire. “...*When you sell on credit to some of these enterprises, you make a lot of profit; but you need someone to introduce you*” (O., 29 year old salted-fish seller). These women therefore look for partners in the enterprises to facilitate the sale of their fish.

**Some groups of fishmongers** have relations outside the sector as some women go to sell their fish along the railway line. To avoid trouble during the trip, they look for a military man to protect them so they can travel without paying for the journey and to ensure protection for their goods. “...*you cannot survive in that business if you have no military friend on the railway ...*” (A., 37-year-old fish smoker).

in this respect and fisheries departments need to be proactive and collect the base line information necessary to lobby for support from lead organizations and for the inclusion of fishing communities in national response actions. However, the base line information has to be complemented with specific larger scale studies in order to enable the sector to move beyond anecdotal arguments of high prevalence rates in the fisheries sector. The SFLP was successful in creating increased awareness and attention to HIV/AIDS in fishing communities by establishing the necessary institutional linkages and provide data. With the support of the Programme, HIV/AIDS in fishing communities has been increasingly mainstreamed into national responses and plans in the countries of the region and the particular risk situation of the fisheries sector was also given attention at the global level.

In the communities in Benin and Congo where SFLP's interventions took place, the Programme documented the different forms of and reasons for transactional sex and how 'hot spots' can be linked through professional sex workers moving between town and fisheries landing sites. An in-depth understanding of the broader risk and vulnerability environment of the fisheries communities is important for planning

adequate control and mitigation actions. SFLP experienced how important cross-sectoral partnerships are. The response needed to control HIV/AIDS in fisheries requires joint efforts by different sectors and not exclusively the health sector.

Through its communication and triangulation intervention, SFLP gained valuable experience and disseminated 'good practices', e.g. the importance of ownership by national and local actors, and how partnerships with NGOs can allow for experience sharing and increased awareness of the particular characteristics of the fisheries sector. These characteristics have to be taken into account in diagnostic surveys and be reflected in response planning processes. In order to make the interventions sustainable SFLP emphasized the need to empower and strengthen the capacity of organizations and associations. Building on the base line information collected through the KAP studies, both TfD and triangulation proved to be effective means for mobilizing community members in participatory action planning processes. TfD was a particularly powerful tool for involving important numbers of actors, including women and vulnerable groups, and for making it possible to discuss sensitive issues such as HIV.

However, the Programme did also face some constraints in its work e.g. (i) there tended to be an element of 'elite capture' at the higher levels of committees and some socio-professional groups were not represented in the processes, (ii) the participation of women was sometimes low, even where quota allocations were in place (in Benin there is a required 33 percent female participation in HIV/AIDS committees); (iii) the existing stigmatization resulted in difficulties to reach families affected by HIV/AIDS, (iv) the capacity of voluntary testing, care and treatment centers was insufficient, and (v) prevailing taboos made it difficult to address gender issues in sexuality.

Major challenges remain with regard to mobilising national responses to gender issues with regard to HIV/AIDS in the fisheries sector. Increased integration of gender and HIV/AIDS concerns in the fishery strategies and development plans are needed. To enable and enhance this process there should be training available for the fisheries departments and monitoring of gender and HIV/AIDS issues in fisheries communities should become a priority.

There are also other areas for which further interventions are needed and that were not covered by the Programme. SFLP did not, for example, address the vulnerability situation of individual members of households having suffered from HIV/AIDS related death, such as orphaned children or widows. However, there is need for specific attention and intervention in these situations in the fisheries environment. Young children are often involved in fisheries activities but at the death of a parent due to AIDS, they may risk no longer having access to fishing equipment and hence not be able to pursue their livelihood activity. This could lead to the adoption of alternative coping strategies, including transactional sex.

It is essential that future HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment interventions include aspects of a regional coordination and response to mobility and migration. SFLP contributed to the formulation of a regional HIV/AIDS project. The project is a result of perceived needs for actions on HIV and AIDS in fisheries. Lessons learned from the SFLP interventions and from southern African countries, as well as collaboration with regional economic organizations and subregional projects have been integrated in the new project document. This regional HIV/AIDS project aims at improving the knowledge base of HIV/AIDS in the fisheries sector; its dynamics in the sector and the possible response and investment strategies that could best contribute to effective mitigation of impacts of HIV and AIDS in fishing communities. The project will also study how fisheries could make a contribution to the fight against the pandemic as provider of fish products and securing the production. It is hoped that this project will bring hope to West and Central African fishing communities that are currently victims of the HIV/AIDS threat.

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# 10. Mainstreaming gender in fisheries

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## INTRODUCTION

The concept of gender – dealing with the socially, culturally and economically determined roles and relationships between men and women – is not a new idea in fisheries. It was first being introduced in the late 1980s and early 1990s until which time Women in Development (WID) activities had been the main approach for achieving more effective development. Realising that integrating women in the development process was not sufficient, a shift took place to tackling the issue of power relationships and the inequity in treatment between men and women. The gender approach recognises the different concerns of men and women in order to achieve equitable and sustainable development. Today, most large development institutions have recognised the need for gender considerations, and gender policies and strategies are commonplace. The promotion of gender equality is one of the eight Millennium Development Goals agreed on in 2000 for eliminating world poverty.<sup>37</sup> However, there is still some ambiguity as to what exactly gender means and much remains to be done when it comes to practical application (Bennett et al., 2004; FAO, 2006).

Until recently, gender analysis in fishing communities focused mainly on men's and women's different occupational roles, i.e. that men are usually fishing and women are to a large extent involved in post-harvest and marketing activities. While the role of women in the management and utilization of natural resources is generally acknowledged, it does not carry the same weight as that of men. Given that production goals have tended to be the focus of research and policy, the predominately male catching sector has remained the centre of attention (Bennett et al., 2004). However, with the shift to a multidimensional and more holistic definition of poverty and the increased focus on reducing vulnerability, gender has become more central to fisheries policy and development practice. A more in-depth analysis often reveals a more complex picture with multifaceted relationships between both men and women as boat owners, processors and sellers, as well as family members, community members and co-workers. Fisheries resource management must be linked to all levels of the capture, resource management and fish value chain in which both men and women have important roles to play. It is hence important to look beyond women as processors and men as fishermen.

Gender mainstreaming has been the main approach for addressing gender concerns in global development since 1995. The concept is defined by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) as “the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies and programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated” (ECOSOC, 1997). However, some of the initial supporters of gender mainstreaming would argue that the approach has not been successful and that it is

<sup>37</sup> Goal No 3: Promote gender equality and empower women.

at critical cross-roads at the moment. This may be because implementation so far has mainly focused on the institutional level, e.g. staffing and training of staff, policies and indicators, and more attention could be needed at the operational field level to make it happen (Mehra and Gupta, 2006).

The sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA) constitutes a valuable framework for analysing gender relations in fishing communities. While the SFLP did not prioritise gender analysis *per se* at the beginning of its activities, the Programme developed approaches and methodologies for gender over time and these were included as an integral element in the field programme. After a brief overview of the gender concept in fisheries, this chapter presents the SFLP gender analysis tool and mainstreaming approach and reports on the Programme's findings and achievements. The importance of taking a holistic and participatory approach and to work simultaneously at the community, meso and national levels proved essential for ensuring sustainable and equitable results.

### **GENDER IN FISHERIES**

In terms of gender, the most common picture portrayed in fisheries is one of women and men playing distinct roles with men fishing and women being involved in processing and marketing of the fish. This is largely true as a generalisation of professional roles. However, the picture becomes much more complex when the relationships between women and men are approached in detail, in different countries and in differing cultural contexts. In some countries, like Benin, Cambodia, Congo, Mali, and Thailand, women fish or collect fish on the lake in their own boats. In other countries, e.g. Uganda, it may even be a taboo for women to be on board a fishing vessel but they can own boats and hire men as crew. However, these women are generally few in numbers due to a lack of access to credit and the more established tradition of male ownership of boats. On the other hand, the majority of men work as crew; few men have access to enough funds to purchase their own boats (Allison, 2003).

Women are often responsible for ensuring the availability of working capital for fish processing and they are not expected to run out of working capital. Moreover, in the small body of social science literature that started to appear in the 1980s looking at the more intricate nature of male and female roles, women are described as providing key links in capital accumulation for reinvestment in fishing, such as in new boats and nets (Okali, 2006).

Still, in many natural resource based livelihoods, women tend to have a subordinate role even when they participate directly in production and other income generating activities. The most detailed information relating to the livelihoods of women and men in the fisheries sector is available for communities in developing countries that practice aquaculture. While all the literature points to the important roles played by women in aquaculture, virtually all also raise the same kinds of issues as are raised in other natural resources literature: women benefit little, if at all, in terms of remuneration, resource control, status and decision-making. Women's aquaculture tasks are widely reported to be especially convenient as they fit closely with their reproductive roles (Kusakabe and Kelkar, 2001). For this reason, and because they are undertaken by women, these tasks are often viewed as requiring little skill. In addition, the women involved are reportedly ignored by extension services and have minimal access to training and new technologies. It is only recently that questions such as "What role has aquaculture and fisheries development interventions to play in increasing women's capabilities, empowerment and social advancement?" are being asked (Brugère *et al.*, 2001; SFLP, 2003).

### **SFLP GENDER STRATEGY: ANALYSIS TOOL AND MAINSTREAMING**

As its pathway to supporting necessary changes for achieving gender equity, SFLP adopted a gender mainstreaming approach similar to FAO's gender strategy (see FAO,

2002). This approach, which was developed in parallel with the SFLP field programme, addressed gender concerns in a broad context by strengthening social capital and contributing to social cohesion. It took into account the process-based and strategic opportunity approach suggested by Mehra and Gupta (2006) who argued that by producing tangible and motivating results at the operational level, a gradual move of gender concerns to the bigger goals of cultural and social change and empowerment and equality can be achieved.

At first, a gender analysis tool was developed. The approach combined a gender analytical framework<sup>38</sup> with a livelihoods analysis, allowing an understanding of gender relation dynamics and the institutional context, and facilitating the negotiation for change in social, political and economic relationships between men and women as well as between youth and elder. The gender analysis process involved communities and community-based organizations (CBOs) and consisted of nine main steps (see SFLP Gender Training Manual):<sup>39</sup>

1. Negotiate and design partnerships with the community.
2. Collect data for gender profiles at household, community organization, value chain, and policies, institutions and processes (PIP) levels.
3. Analyse data, prepare gender profiles and visualise gender inequalities.
4. Validate the profiles and identify changes the community will engage in.
5. Elaborate a community gender strategy.
6. Prepare action plans for each of the CBOs.
7. Facilitate the development of a consolidated plan for organizational capacity building.
8. Prepare a consolidated community project.
9. Assess the project and start implementation.

Partnerships with community-based and meso level actors were an important part of the process. Questions related to inequalities between men and women are often sensitive issues in communities and an open discussion from the beginning, involving different groups of both men and women, is a necessary approach to gain acceptance. It was also found fundamental to negotiate partnerships with communities and meso-level actors and to instigate ownership of the process with CBOs and partner organizations.

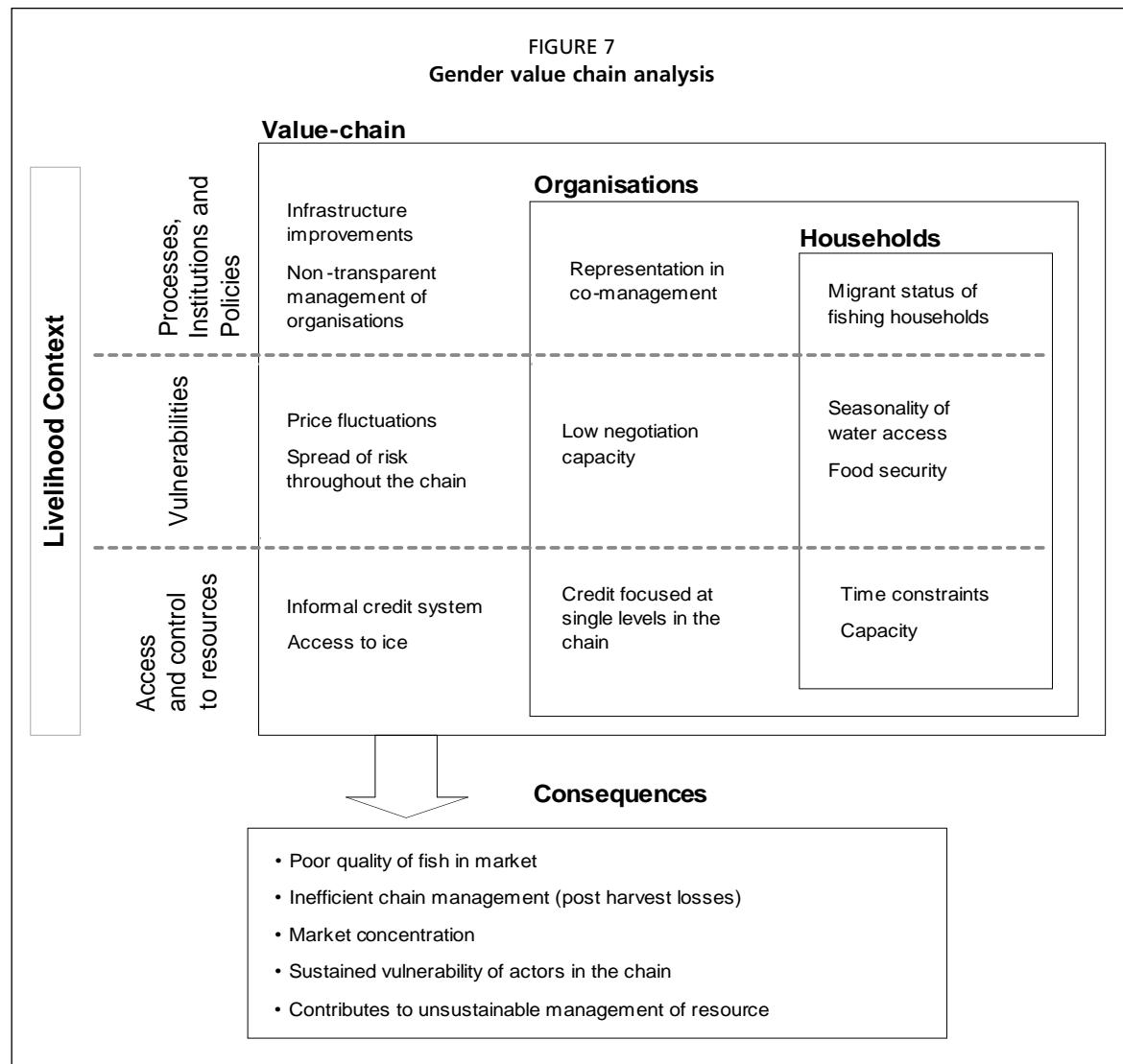
An important part of the tool was the value chain analysis where gender roles and relationships between male and female actors of different socio-professional groups were analysed. These roles and relationships were also looked at in the light of a changing environment, e.g. the globalization of fish markets. Institutions and policies, vulnerability factors and profiles with regard to access and control influence different actors' possibilities to change and adapt to external influences. Changes within the value chain will impact on organizations and households and the development will have implications for both women and men along the whole value chain, their livelihoods and ultimately the sustainability of the fishery resources. Some key aspects include:

- Infrastructure improvements are likely to be an advantage for male actors since they have easier access to ice and cold stores.
- Price fluctuations are impacting more on female actors (e.g. the paddle canoe collectors who are mainly women) as well as on poorer male actors.
- The risk at the wholesale level is often transferred to the level of fishers or female fish mongers who have less control over transport and have less capital.
- In informal credit systems and with regard to access to ice, women are often in disadvantaged position.

(Tindall and Holvoet, 2008).

<sup>38</sup> E.g. the Harvard Analytical Framework (HAF) and Moser Framework (Smith, March and Mukhopadhyay, 1998)

<sup>39</sup> KIT I, available at [www.sflp.org/fr/007/kit\\_genre/kitformation.htm](http://www.sflp.org/fr/007/kit_genre/kitformation.htm) (French version) and [www.sflp.org/eng/007/gender\\_approach/trainingtools.html](http://www.sflp.org/eng/007/gender_approach/trainingtools.html) (English version) (SFLP, 2003).



Source: Tindall and Holvoet, 2008.

The gender profiles would include information at different levels, starting with the community and community-based organizations (male, female and mixed), and households. Special consideration was given to vulnerability factors (trends with regard to the abundance of natural resources, population growth, seasonality patterns and external shocks) and the local situation would be analysed in a larger framework – in a sectoral, or national or subregional context – and paying particular attention to PIPs.

The gender profiles formed the basis, together with a process of feedback sessions, for the formulation of community gender strategies and CBO gender action plans. The action plans addressed both practical and strategic needs of men and women.

Secondly, incorporating the gender analysis in the gender mainstreaming process, SFLP promoted **horizontal and vertical gender mainstreaming**.<sup>40</sup> In practice, this meant that facilitators and gender specialists were active at the meso and the macro levels providing technical advice and guiding the social dialogue at the same time as project teams and their partners were accompanied in a “hands on” approach at the meso and local field level.

<sup>40</sup> See also Gender Guidelines KIT II available at [www.sflp.org/fr/guide\\_genre2/index.html](http://www.sflp.org/fr/guide_genre2/index.html) (Holvoet, Gnimadi and Tindall, 2007).

The vertical mainstreaming included a two-direction process: bottom-up and top-down. The “bottom-up” process started at the micro level (the community), where mainly social dialogue, communication initiatives and peer pressure (e.g. collective action) were used to mobilise support from communities and meso level actors (organizations working with the community). Practical changes were created through the implementation of community based action plans. These results were then, with the support from partners at the meso level, used to inform and influence stakeholders at the macro level (national policy). The “top-down” process started at the macro level and oriented and influenced changes at the micro and meso levels. This process, which requires consolidated gender profiles that were representative for different fisheries, was only implemented by SFLP in Benin and Mali. In Benin, SFLP used the shrimp marketing chain as an entry point for making a gender profile. Based on this profile, the need for improved quality control, training and monitoring in different parts of the value chain could be analysed and mainstreamed from a gender perspective.

SFLP experience suggested that it was best to handle the two processes, bottom-up and top-down, simultaneously and that the interaction between micro, meso and macro actors led to integration of gender in policies and institutions. Interventions were needed at the macro level to ensure political support for those changes initiated at micro level that required changes in institutions and regulations. It was important that experience and learning from the micro and meso level informed decision makers at the macro level. Figure 8 shows the different interactions between micro, meso and macro levels in vertical gender mainstreaming process.

*Horizontal mainstreaming* refers to the integration of gender in each phase of the project cycle at all levels (micro, meso and macro). Horizontal mainstreaming reflects and incorporates the need for interventions to be cross-sectoral.

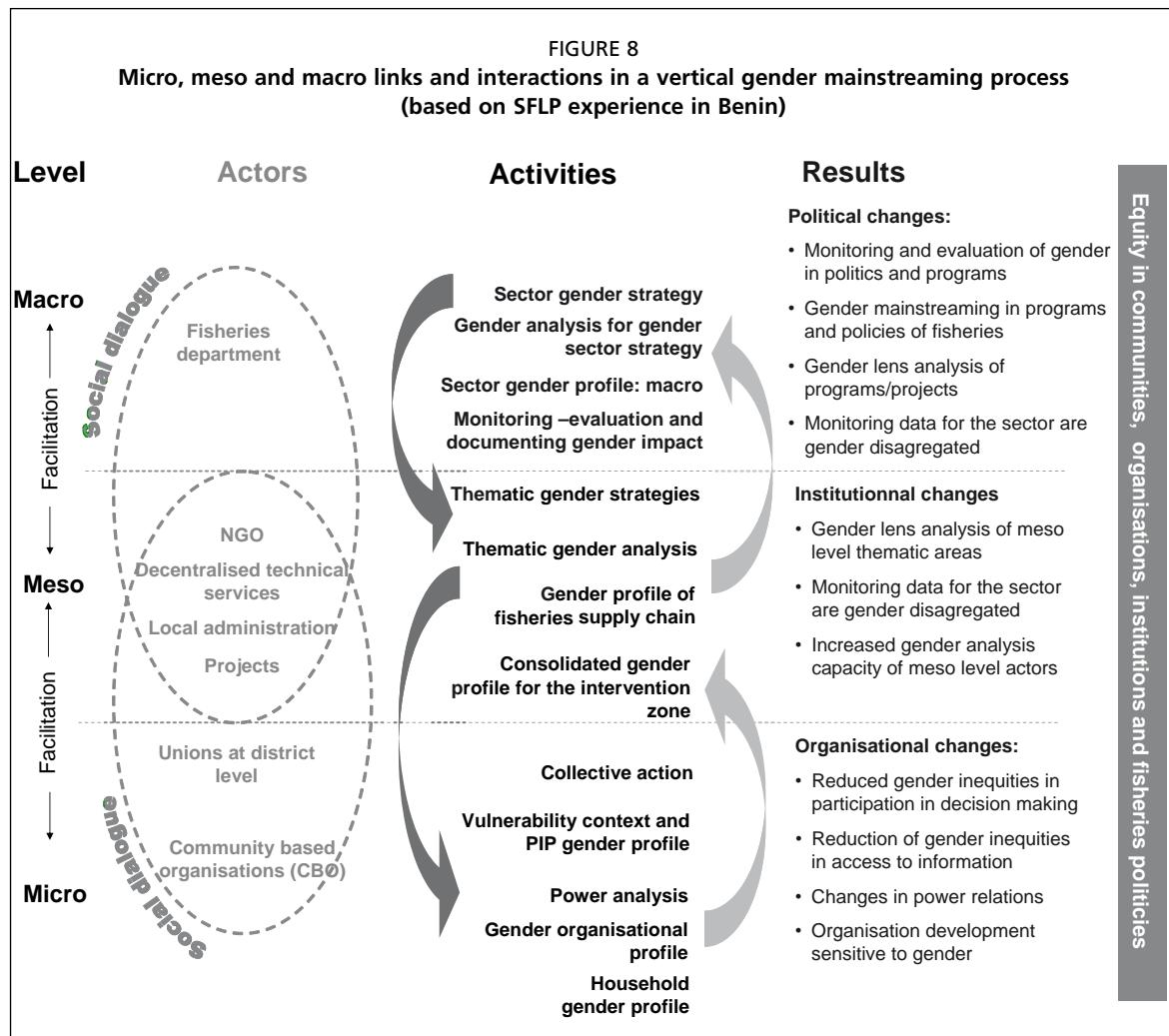
SFLP used a gender sensitive organizational development (OD) process to assist communities in creating a community development “vision” that incorporated gender. The process resulted in the implementation of collective actions and negotiations for social and political changes that included a gender perspective. Error! Reference source not found. illustrates how gender and OD were combined in the approach: the gender process at the left hand side and the organization development process at the right hand side are joined in the middle presenting the outcome of integrating both. The entry point was the community organizations through which changes could be achieved, both at the household/community and PIP levels.

SFLP often found that partner OD resource persons who were involved in the process needed better information on gender profiles and also guidance and training with regard to how to prioritise gender concerns and how to integrate these systematically in their work.

The use of a moderator and the creation of multiactor platforms at meso and macro levels proved to be an effective option for extending such support. While reminded by some that these platforms can become “battlefields within which mutually agreeable compromises are sought”, it is also true that “...mutual monitoring to safeguard the positive outcomes in line with the shared aims” (Kimura, 2005, p. 217) can result in positive development outcomes. SFLP experiences suggest strongly using such platforms. In, for example, the Gambia, Niger and Congo, they became the environment within which the gender agenda was discussed and also negotiated and implemented.

Other key approaches used by SFLP in the context of practical gender mainstreaming included:

- Social dialogue within and between community-based organizations and with partners for reducing discrimination and help prevent or manage conflict. Social dialogue made it possible to increase social cohesion and to negotiate changes in power sharing at the level of organizations and also have an effect at the household level.

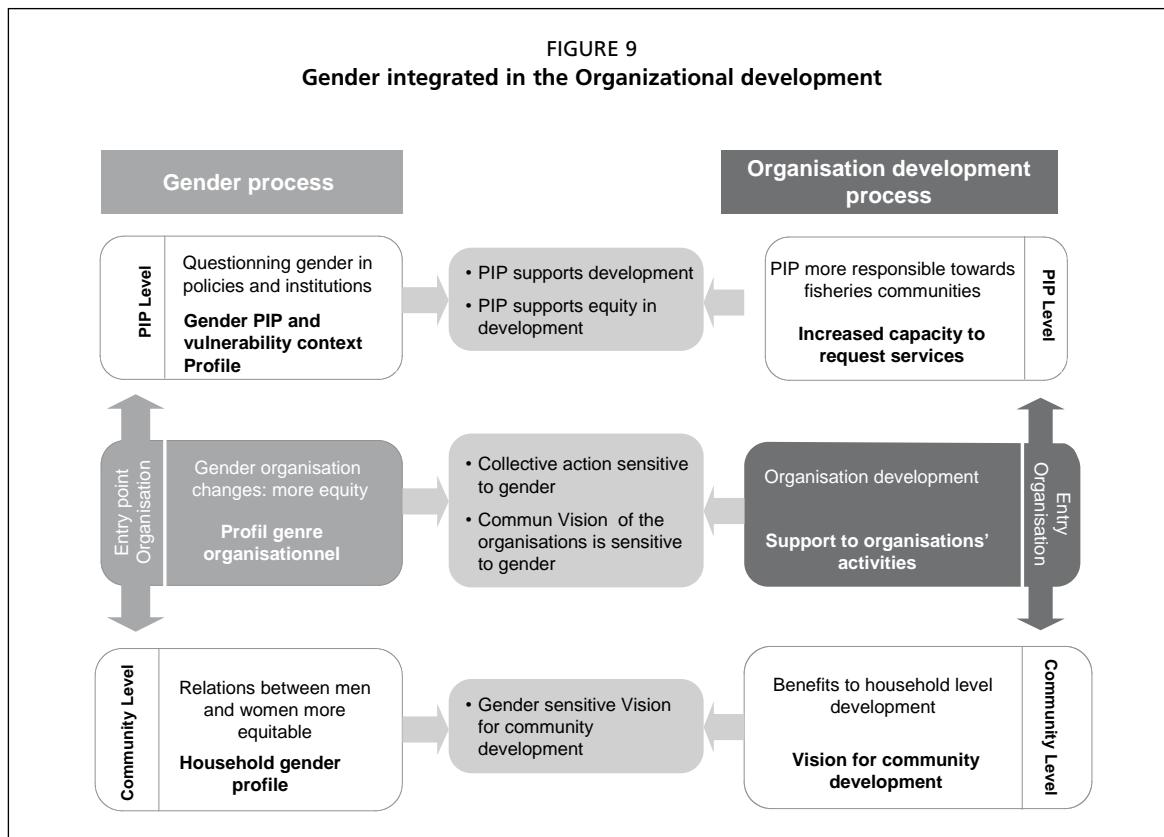


Source: Holvoet, Gnimadi and Tindall, 2007, p. 17.

- **Communication**, using tools such as radios, for facilitating the horizontal diffusion of achievements and its replication in other communities. A gender analysis of the communication strategy could reveal that changes were needed, e.g. in Burkina Faso on Lake Bagré, the radio program schedule had to be adapted and the interests of some community groups needed to be given more time and attention.
- **Participatory and transparent processes** in all community actions for the promotion of gender sensitive CBOs, e.g. in Congo the organization of a general assembly at the village level guaranteed transparency in the process of establishing committees. Meetings with village and local leaders on gender inequities made the leaders publicly commit to changes. It also made it easier to undertake and monitor positive actions for reducing inequities, e.g. informing women on meetings, guaranteeing the participation of vulnerable and poor groups in decision-making processes or programming activities on livelihoods diversification, etc.
- **Integration of gender** in activity plans of meso level actors and partners.

#### ENHANCED UNDERSTANDING OF GENDER

SFLP found that an important obstacle to equity in terms of access and control is linked to information and communication. Women and their organizations are often under-informed and have higher illiteracy rates. Because of these inequities and cultural values, women are often kept at the margins of development processes and are excluded from decision-making.



Source: Holvoet, Gnimadi and Tindall, 2007, p. 15.

In Tanji, the Gambia, SFLP found that illiteracy rates were higher among women than men. The high illiteracy and the fact that savings and credit cooperatives had no special provisions for illiterate clients increased women's vulnerability to becoming victims of fraudulent practices (Mattar and Mendy, 2006). Despite a higher membership of women in CBOs – there were twice as many female members as men – and a higher demand for financial services from women, it was found that women had only access to 6.3 percent of the total amount of credit given out in spite of having 20 percent more deposits in the savings and credit union than their male counterparts (Mendy and Njia, 2003; Gnimadi, 2004).

Case studies by SFLP in Congo, Gambia and Gabon documented how institutions and regulations revolving around access to resources favour men. In Makotipoko, Congo, extension services were found to often target subjects that interested men, hence leading to their higher ratio in participation (ADECOR, 2005). In the case of Tanzania, training sessions organized by the Freshwater Fisheries Institute, which required functional formal literacy, had lower attendance by women due to financial constraints and parents' belief that education is for men (Medard *et al.*, 2001). In Gabon, women – as well as migrant fishers – were found to be excluded from land ownership. This impacted negatively on their access to credit and savings services requiring collateral.

A study on gender and microfinance in relation to participation in fisheries resources management undertaken in two fishing communities on Lake Noukoué, Benin, indicated that women were not at all represented on the lake management committee (Djoi and Kakpo, 2004). In Tanzania, a random survey of twenty beach management units around lake Victoria indicated an 85 percent men and 15 percent women representation (Medard *et al.*, 2001). Even in areas where effort had been made to ensure the participation of women, it was often found to remain limited. In Mali, Lake Sélingué, women appeared to participate only in the communal fisheries committees (21–25 percent of members were women) and not at all in the management

## BOX 12

**The complexity of gender roles: narratives from SFLP studies  
in Benin, Niger and The Gambia**

- The fish supply chain is dominated by powerful men and women with capital. Actions by them (e.g. bulk buying and hiring the labour of poorer community members) can worsen the dependency of poorer post-harvest groups.
- Poorer socio-economic groups have little control over the fish marketing chain, operate with low profit margins and are more vulnerable than wealthier groups to decreases in catches and poor services in processing, conservation and micro finance. Their activities are less profitable because they have only access to poor quality fish and are unable to keep fish fresh since they lack ice and marketing information. Loans from micro-finance institutions serve more as revolving funds for marketing than investment loans for fishing and processing equipment, and both informal and formal credits are risky.
- Female entrepreneurs are more responsible than men for meeting household expenses but are less mobile, less educated and less involved in policy and management decisions than their male counterparts. Poorer women use revolving funds to meet household expenses in periods of poor catches and this reduces the funds available for business. The majority of female-owned fishery enterprises are therefore small and grow slowly, if at all.
- Women point to hostile male behaviour aimed at keeping them minor players in the sector. Male solidarity between wholesalers and boat owners allows men to monopolise the landed fish and, through male members of the ice plant management committee, to monopolise ice supply (*The Gambia*).
- All socio-economic categories use family labour, especially women's labour. This limits women's access to education, training and alternative income-earning activities.
- Men who are by division of roles excluded from processing or fish transformation and with no independent capital to buy own equipment for fishing are dependent on relations with female processors (*Benin*).

*Note:* Where no country is indicated the comment applies to all three.

*Source:* Sustainable Fisheries Livelihood Programme fieldwork, 2005 ; Gnimadi, C., 2004)

team holding the real decision-making power (Howard, 2006). In Benin, regulations stipulate that local institutions such as the local committees for HIV/AIDS control must have a minimum of 33 percent women in their management structures. However, lack of information and self-confidence among women led to the failure of achieving this target (Pades, 2007).

In addition to variations across countries, regions and cultural settings, the Programme clearly noted that gender issues and relationships also vary within communities and between subgroups of people. Women and men are not homogenous groups but individuals that share some – but not necessarily all – common characteristics. There are different categories of women and men, and their roles may vary in different contexts but also the value given differs, e.g. in the household, in the community and as professionals. In studies carried out by SFLP on women dominating fish marketing chains in Senegal and Cameroon, it was found that they used complex marketing strategies and that relatives were important as a source of capital, both for fish processing and trading. As a consequence, the professional relationships were not

purely market-oriented but were also influenced by domestic power-relations (Cherou, Yamina and Bellal, 2005; Nogaye Diop, 2005). SFLP documented practices of male and female entrepreneurs in Benin, Niger and the Gambia. The narratives included in Box 12 illustrate the complexity of the role and position of women in fisheries.

In Mali, work funded by SFLP documented that the relationships between actors in the fish marketing chain were influenced by vulnerability factors and by the increased globalisation of fish markets. Higher prices and increasing sanitary requirements are changing traditional roles and gender relations. In some cases, this leads to the exclusion of women and vulnerable groups. Women appear to be particularly threatened by such changes and when the number of active traders decreased, the number of female traders decreased more than the number of male traders. SFLP documented the gender profiles of the Selingué fisheries sector when intervening in different aspects of the fish value chain.

One important strategy for combating vulnerability in a situation of dwindling fishery resources is diversification of income generating activities (IGA). The gender analyses carried out by SFLP in the context of its Pilot Projects for co-management and the post harvest subsector showed that the barriers to equal opportunities for men and women in livelihoods diversification were different from one context to another. Some of the more common barriers found that especially women faced with respect to equity in livelihoods diversification included:

- Lack of access to micro finance.
- Lack of access to information.
- Low literacy and educational level.
- Weak organizational capacity.
- Limited opportunities, time and capacity to develop profitable IGAs.
- Constraints with regard to market access (access to distant markets, dependency on buyers from towns).
- Health issues because of higher rates of illness among women and their role in caring for sick family members as well as financing medicines and treatments.

In some situations, limited participation in decision-making and lack of access to resources as well as technology barriers for women and unavailability of technical training also constituted important obstacles to the development of IGAs. The analyses also revealed that a number of gender issues were relevant to the overall context, e.g. vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, conflicts and integration of migrants, justifying the need for conducting gender analysis before livelihoods diversification through IGAs is promoted.

### ADDRESSING GENDER ISSUES

Through the application of gender mainstreaming, many of the issues identified in the gender analysis process – and described above – could be addressed through the formulation of field activities. Interventions included actions addressing female representation in organizations, more efficient and equitable information flows and redistribution of access to resources. At the level of community gender strategies and CBO action plans, the process helped communities to develop common goals and activities, leading to development benefits by addressing gender inequalities. Some examples of activities planned and implemented by communities are presented in Box 13.

SFLP's focus on partnerships and its close collaboration with in particular meso-level actors clearly influenced how development interventions were formulated and implemented by other organizations. In Table 13, an example from Congo is given of how one of SFLP's partner organizations agreed to change the focus of its interventions with regard to livelihood diversification after having assessed the work plan through a gender lens.

**BOX 13**  
**Community gender action plans**

**Equity measures and access to decision making processes**

In Tafouka, Niger, the village council of elders (*Comité des sages*) agreed that they would gain (in terms of access to donors, impact of development efforts and from the good ideas women developed for improvement of livelihood) by including women in their council. Women's groups and their participation in the council were strengthened. The effect was that the Tafouka community development plans were now sensitive to the needs and interests of women which in turn increased social cohesion and motivation of members of CBOs (250% increase in female CBOs). This lead to the creation of a union and made it possible for the community to be a member of a national federation which supports grain bank based credit schemes and input supply shops.

In Burkina Faso, men and women agreed on changing the informal institution of access to landed fish and an agreement was signed between female CBOs and male CBOs. The social dialogue and the activities with the groups led to more equity in access to information. Women became involved in generating information and participating in radio programs, and hence the power relations in the fisheries community were influenced.

In Gambia, the board of the Fisheries service centre – FSC (providing ice, cold store facilities and processing facilities) and the credit union agreed that certain rules and regulations were causing exclusion and that these were based on inequities that were harmful to the chain efficiency. The leaders and the fisheries department agreed on analyzing gender issues and review credit union policies and services as well as the FSC policies. New boards and new policies were agreed on, all contributing to improved equity with regard to opportunities in fish processing and marketing (fresh, smoked and dried-fermented fish).

**Equity in participation in communication and information**

Women and their organizations often have less access to information due to, among other things, high illiteracy rates. In Bagré community in Burkina Faso, inter and intra group meetings were organized to contribute to better information sharing and new rules on feedback and sharing information were developed and adhered to within the groups.

In Congo, men agreed to include women in the theatre group. The subject (HIV/AIDS and gender) needed both male and female players and the participatory process of discussing the results of the studies and to come to an agreement on the script could not be done without integrating the vision of women. The participation of women contributed positively to their self-esteem and to their socio-professional organizations, which increased the women's motivation to take up responsibilities.

Social communication was an important aspect of the co-management process in Cameroon. The fact that women were under-represented during the first meetings of the process was discussed with the men. When the selection of social communication agents was brought up there was agreement that women should be equally represented. It was found that women were more interested in participating in management plan decisions and being part of the committees when they were clearly informed on the transparency and good governance principles that had been advocated during the social communication phase.

TABLE 13  
Reorienting actions on livelihoods diversification after a gender lens exercise

Before doing a gender assessment	After doing a gender assessment and the gender strategy taking into account
<p><b>Planned activities</b></p> <p>Promotion of cassava production by reproduction through propagation by cuttings of disease resistant varieties and diffusion to women to promote their IGA (attention to problem of paid labour and activity that will be open to all households)</p> <p>Assist marketing of cassava roots on Pointe Noire market</p>	<p><b>Planned activities</b></p> <p>Promotion of cassava production but oriented on processing to create more value added and give less constraints in terms of transport of produce to the market</p> <p>Technical evaluation of the needed technology and the access and capacity of male and female groups</p> <p>Economic analysis of investments in technology and propose ways on how households could invest and run the tools (eventual group investment) but individual marketing of product</p> <p>Analyse opportunity of grouped marketing to reduce direct and indirect cost to women</p> <p>Strengthen the capacity of female CBOs to work together</p> <p>Intervention to promote savings and use of family budgets, assist accessibility of savings services</p>
<p>Gender inequities that were addressed through the activities:</p> <p>Reduced cassava production affects 70% of women and affects 30% of men</p> <p>Non availability of paid labour because of jealousy and fear for witchcraft affects 64% of the men and 36% of women</p>	<p>Gender inequities that were addressed through the activities:</p> <p>Workload of women (group action, technical evaluation taking into account women's strategic needs)</p> <p>Reduced profit margins because of lack of transport and exaggerated informal taxations along the road that affects mostly women</p> <p>Training ratio: 42% male, 31% female</p> <p>Number of organizations: 67% men ; 33% women (who are not registered organizations)</p> <p>Gap in responsibility of women in household expenditures and less capacity to save</p>

Source: SFLP field work.

Once implemented, interventions formulated with a gender perspective in mind contributed to changes in power structures and the role of women. In terms of what could be achieved with regard to such changes and empowerment, Table 14 gives an overview of the results of work in Burkina Faso as an example.

While the impact of SFLP's gender mainstreaming process was most noticeable at the community and meso-level, PIPs at higher levels were also influenced to a certain extent. The support to collective bargaining for fishing people's rights within CBOs and the strengthening of women's capabilities to express their own views within these organizations – involving both women and men – as well as the active role played by the Programme in collective action to enable women be appointed as officials in these organizations, by removing educational qualifications for leadership positions, are noteworthy.

### THE WAY FORWARD: TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY IN FISHERIES

The gender mainstreaming approach adopted by the SFLP was consistent with the call for holistic approaches within livelihoods programmes: people-centred approaches that require cross-sectoral, cross-ministerial and cross-organizational cooperation. Gender concerns exist at all levels – among households, communities, meso actors and at the national policy – and analyzing gender relations and mainstreaming become more effective if bottom-up and top-down processes are implemented at the same time.

TABLE 14

Overview of empowerment and changes in power sharing in Bagré Chantier (Burkina Faso)

Type of power	Changes in terms of power sharing	Impacts in terms of empowerment
Community and CBO level	<p>Visible : Institutionalised decision-making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Access to information</li> <li>– Reduced “elite capture” by the fact of female CBOs being united and consulting one another</li> <li>– Increase in equity in the gender organizational profile in terms of access and control over different assets and strategies</li> <li>– More transparency in the co-management process and attribution of credits</li> <li>– More effective participation of women</li> </ul>	<p><b>– Political empowerment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Women’s participation in the marketing commission</li> <li>– Women’s processors union organised</li> <li>– Women generate information and contribute to the meetings</li> </ul>
CBO and household level	<p>Hidden : Influencing agenda setting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Increased interest and room for women, very vulnerable groups and youth to express their opinion</li> <li>– More time available to participate in meetings and in the decision making processes</li> <li>– More solidarity (assistance to face problems and also understanding for the factors causing the problems)</li> <li>– Increased capacity of the poor to participate because of their inclusion in technical trainings and in literacy classes</li> <li>– Poor are not anymore considered as ‘without solution for their poverty’</li> </ul>	<p><b>Social empowerment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Increased time and capacity to participate in meetings</li> <li>– Women have more say on their mobility</li> <li>– Increased attention to the participation of poor and very vulnerable persons to the activities</li> <li>– Increased access to information and to decision making processes</li> </ul> <p><b>Economic empowerment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Increased solidarity through informal credit, credit committee assists the recovery of loans for the very vulnerable</li> </ul>
Household level	<p>Invisible : Influencing opinion making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Increased social cohesion and less conflicts, more inclusion and less barriers (for fish mongers and women processors) to participation</li> <li>– Men consider women capable</li> <li>– Consultation and exchange of information at the household level</li> <li>– Increased self esteem by women, poor and youth</li> <li>– More equity in the gender household profile</li> <li>– The monitoring and control of the management agreement is not anymore considered as a ‘men’s business’ and women can participate in the co management process</li> </ul>	<p><b>Political empowerment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Male fishmongers included in the debate on fisheries and community activities concerning fisheries</li> <li>– Women generate information and participate in decision making</li> </ul> <p><b>Social empowerment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Increased respect and appreciation between fishmongers, fishers and fish processors</li> <li>– Increased know how for women: group management, technical issues, literacy, etc.</li> <li>– Increased time and capacity to participate in meetings</li> <li>– Men appreciate the participation of women in group activities</li> </ul> <p><b>Economic empowerment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Women contribute more to the food security of the household and to the expenses</li> </ul>

Source: Kaboré, C. 2006

Meso level actors are crucial in both processes. However, meso level actors often lack basic skills and need training on how to address gender concerns and assess the differential impacts of programs and policies on women and men. SFLP also experienced that they commonly needed support in how to plan and budget for gender assessments and how to use more efficiently the gender profiles produced through the assessments to guide the implementation and monitoring of gender sensitive action plans.

Establishing and maintaining cross-sectoral cooperation between organizations is difficult to achieve; organizational boundaries are often vigorously maintained and budgets carefully protected. However, partnerships are widely referred to as one way of achieving organizational learning beyond organizational boundaries and a means

to achieving the more holistic objectives of development such as gender equity. SFLP experiences draw particular attention to the benefit of investing in partnerships, communication and other special efforts, such as the use of facilitators, for maintaining the social dialogue between different organizations as well as for ensuring micro-meso-macro linkages. SFLP introduced multistakeholder platforms, comprising partners and other organizations with an interest in gender and in the Programme, as a communication forum in this respect.

The process of simultaneously addressing social cohesion and integrating gender through a organizational development approach that builds capacity for negotiating change and collective action proved effective. The need to address social cohesion is based on the fact that fishing communities can be characterised by the important differences that exist between different categories of women and men and the existence of different forms of exclusion and marginalisation because of conflicting interests between different socio-professional groups. Gender issues do not exist in a vacuum but are influenced by a wider context of power relations. More effort needs to be invested in creating an environment conducive to collective action in fishing communities.

The proposed way forward to achieve improved gender equality in fisheries includes increased application of gender analysis by fisheries departments. There is a need to develop sector specific gender strategies at the same time as engaging in overall mainstreaming processes and ensuring that gender equity is an integral part of the development objectives for the fisheries sector. To make the necessary funding available, fisheries poverty and gender objectives need to be reflected in national development planning strategies. Assisting fisheries departments to purposefully work towards equity, collect gender disaggregated data for planning and upscaling the approach, as started by SFLP in a number of countries, should be a priority for national and international development partners.

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# 11. Combining a focus on poverty reduction with responsible fisheries: SFLP's impact on development policy

## INTRODUCTION

The FAO/DFID Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme (SFLP), implemented in partnership with 25 countries in West and Central Africa during the period 1999-2006, had as its overall goal *to reduce poverty among coastal and inland communities through the sustainable use of aquatic resources*. The Programme's philosophy was based on the understanding that there is a need for improved fisheries management in the small-scale fisheries sector in order to safeguard coastal livelihoods and that this should be addressed in a broader context of poverty reduction; fishery resource management and social development are intricately linked, particularly in a poverty context. Reflecting this vision, the design and implementation approach of SFLP were based on two main complementary frameworks: the sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA) and the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (the Code).

The SLA is a broad, multidisciplinary approach with a view to promote a better understanding of and response to the multiple dimensions of poverty. It also provides a methodological framework facilitating the linking of small-scale fisheries communities to mechanisms that can influence policy issues, institutional frameworks and processes, and for strengthening assets – human, social, physical, financial and natural – and reducing vulnerability. The Code aims to facilitate the engagement by government and other stakeholders in more responsible fisheries exploitation and management, with due regard also for social equity, particularly relevant for the livelihoods of the most vulnerable groups in fishing. To do so it provides a reference policy framework with the principles and criteria applicable for the preservation, management and development of fisheries.

By putting the SLA methodologies and the principles contained in the Code into practice, SFLP gained valuable experiences with regard to how to reduce poverty in small-scale fisheries communities at the same time as introducing responsible fishing practices. This technical paper has given an account of this experience and the lessons learned in the process, presented by subject matters in the preceding sections. This final chapter aims at giving a succinct summary of the overall learning and impact of the Programme in a wider development policy context<sup>41</sup>. It sets out with an overview of the complexity of poverty and argues that the SFLP experience has enhanced the way poverty in coastal and rural communities is understood and has helped putting the small-scale fisheries sector higher on the agenda for poverty reduction and fishery resource management. The importance of good governance and political support are discussed. SFLP contributed to the recognition that governance and fishery management for the small-scale fisheries sector, in particular in a developing country poverty context, needs to be dealt with in a different way from how large-scale operations and the

<sup>41</sup> This chapter summarizes some of the discussions and arguments made earlier in this technical paper. It also draws on the SFLP Policy Brief series – *New directions in fisheries: a series of policy briefs on development issues* – and on some of the arguments and conclusions of the final evaluation of the Programme (Cunningham and Holleran, 2007).

fisheries sector as a whole is conventionally managed. Co-management – of fishery resources and social development processes – is the preferred governance regime, requiring attention to policies, institutions and processes (PIPs), micro-macro linkages and equitable participation. The Programme implemented co-management and post-harvest livelihoods pilot projects and proposed key strategies for how to create an enabling environment and address specific vulnerability issues. The starting point for all Programme activities was a good understanding of the poverty context and participatory planning.

### **POVERTY, VULNERABILITY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION**

Poverty has conventionally often been defined in terms of income, (physical) assets and consumption. While these are still important components of poverty, the SFLP approach drew on the emerging broader definition of poverty including also the concepts of vulnerability and marginalization and taking a human rights perspective into account as proposed by the United Nations Social and Economic Council (ECOSOC): “Poverty: a human condition characterized by sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights” (ECOSOC, 2001, point 8).

Based on the SLA framework, the SFLP used participatory poverty profiling methods to guide its interventions. These analytical instruments help answer questions about who the poor are in a particular area, why they are poor and what specific actions are required to address their needs. Gender analysis and value chain analysis, i.e. looking at roles and relationships in the different parts of the fishery system, were other approaches incorporated into the programming processes.

The SFLP experience showed that the two dimensions vulnerability and exclusion are at the centre of poverty in West and Central African fishing communities. Incomes from fishing and related activities are not necessarily always low but tend to be uncertain and variable – according to seasons and daily catches – and wealth is often unevenly distributed among different socio-professional groups within communities. Boat owners and large-scale traders can be among the wealthiest while crew members and those without productive assets are found at the other end of the scale. Women are commonly poorer than their male counterparts.

Different groups within communities are exposed to vulnerability and marginalization in different ways to varying degrees. Migrant fishers, fish workers and their household members were often found to be more vulnerable than their host community counterparts (see Box 14). The internal and external threats to which fishing communities are exposed cover a wide range of issues. Interestingly, a finding from the SFLP poverty profiling exercises was that, for poor fishing people, the risk of resource degradation and the need to manage fisheries might not represent a main immediate concern. In fact, the results and the exploration of local perceptions of poverty pointed to other needs and threats, e.g. access to safe drinking water, health services, education and microfinance. This is typical in situations with high vulnerability since insecurity and uncertainty tend to reduce the incentives to save and to invest in future, which is what fisheries management is largely about. Poverty is also often closely correlated to isolation and lack of access to institutions and services. HIV/AIDS is a prime concern in many fishing communities that is further aggravated by the lack of adequate health services. The SFLP poverty profiles also showed that many fishing communities exhibit limited engagement in local development, low levels of social cohesion, lack of community organizational structures and weak political powers. This makes it difficult for small-scale fishing communities to influence their situation and it makes them vulnerable to unfair treatment and further neglect and marginalization. Limited collaboration between fisheries departments and other ministries at the macro level

**BOX 14**  
**Migrant fishing people**

West and Central African fishing communities have a long tradition of migration. The reasons for this mobility are many including the search for better fishing grounds and escaping poverty. Migrants bring skills and technical knowledge contributing to the local economies of their host communities. However, SFLP studies show that integration of migrant fishing people into recipient coastal communities is not always easy and that migrants are often subject of marginalization and exclusion from various aspects of community life. This impacts their ability to access social services, such as health and education, and to obtain land, and they often fail to participate in political and decision-making processes. Moreover, people who are mobile are often more vulnerable to ill health and infections. The mobility of fishing communities has been identified as one factor contributing to their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS.

The marginalization and vulnerabilities of migrants directly impact on their possibilities and capacities to participate in fishery resource management and local development. SFLP worked actively to empower and strengthen the involvement of migrants. By carrying out detailed participatory analyses – poverty mapping, stakeholder analysis as well as specific migration studies – the Programme ensured that migrant groups, their characteristics and needs, were identified and taken into account in the planning and implementation of activities.

*Source:* FAO. In press. *Managing mobile and migratory fishing for development in West and Central Africa*. New directions in fisheries – A series of policy briefs on development issues. No. 11. Rome, FAO. (available at [www.sflp.org/briefs/eng/policybriefs.html](http://www.sflp.org/briefs/eng/policybriefs.html))

and lack of communication between fishing communities and regional and national development initiatives and actors further aggravate the situation.

Globalization presents both opportunities and threats to fishing dependent communities. Fish trade is becoming increasingly globalised and also the small-scale fisheries sector participates in international trade. The challenge is to ensure that the benefits from the increased opportunities are distributed in an equitable way. An important exercise carried out by SFLP was value chain analyses where gender roles and relationships between male and female actors of different socio-professional groups were investigated. These roles and relationships were also looked at in the light of a changing environment, e.g. the globalisation of fish markets. Institutions and policies, vulnerability factors and the degree of access to and control over resources, market outlets and infrastructure influence different actors' possibilities to change and adapt to external influences. Changes impact on organizations, households and individuals with implications for both women and men along the whole value chain, their livelihoods and ultimately the sustainability of the fishery resources. The SFLP experience showed how local and national – and international – processes are linked and how development opportunities and threats in fishing communities are influenced by external factors. Fishing communities, however, often have limited political power and cannot easily influence decision-making processes or request support.

The impacts of climate change on fishing communities are an additional burden to other poverty drivers that may be felt more severely in the future, increasing the level of uncertainty and vulnerability. Changes in water temperatures and precipitation affect the functioning of ecosystems and hence influence fish stocks. Rising sea levels and increased incidence of extreme weather events are likely to cause disruptions in already exposed coastal communities. Complex links between climate change, fisheries and other sectors will have indirect effects on fishing communities with regard to, for

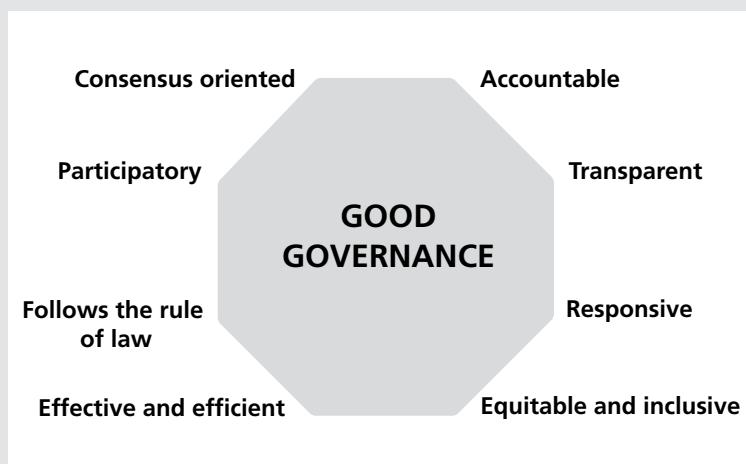
example, the demand for water and financial resources. Exactly how projected climate changes, together with other internal and external influences – e.g. population growth and mobility, and continued globalisation – will affect fisheries and fishing dependent communities in West and Central Africa in the future will to a large extent be decided by the governance systems in place and the political decisions that will be made.

### GOOD GOVERNANCE AND POLITICAL WILL

The need for good governance is at the center of both fisheries management and poverty reduction. Fisheries can only continue to support livelihoods in a sustainable manner if they are responsibly managed and to optimise the contributions of fisheries to poverty reduction requires good governance. Poverty reduction strategies are only effective when implemented within a framework of good governance. Defining good governance as being participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive, and following the rule of law sets the conditions and principles on which fisheries management and poverty reduction initiatives should be based (see Box 15).

**BOX 15**  
**What is good governance?**

*Governance* refers to the way decisions are made and implemented. In relation to natural resource management it would include the “formal and informal arrangements, institutions, and mores which determine how resources or an environment are utilized; how problems and opportunities are evaluated and analyzed, what behavior is deemed acceptable or forbidden, and what rules and sanctions are applied to affect the pattern of resource and environmental use.” (Juda, 1999). *Good governance* can be described to have eight major characteristics: “participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. It assures that corruption is minimized, the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society.” (ESCAP, 2008).



*Sources:* Juda L. 1999. *Considerations in the development of a functional approach to the governance of large marine ecosystems*. In: *Ocean Dev Int Law* 30:89-125.

UNESCAP. 2008. *What is good governance?* Web site of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. (available at [www.unescap.org/pdd/prs/ProjectActivities/Ongoing/gg/governance.asp](http://www.unescap.org/pdd/prs/ProjectActivities/Ongoing/gg/governance.asp))

**BOX 16**  
**The Code and its provisions for small-scale fisheries**

“Recognizing the important contributions of artisanal and small-scale fisheries to employment, income, and food security, states should appropriately protect the rights of fishers and fish workers, particularly those engaged in subsistence, small-scale and artisanal fisheries, to a secure and just livelihood, as well as preferential access, where appropriate, to traditional fishing grounds and resources in the waters under their national jurisdiction” (Article 6.18 of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, FAO, 1995)

“Recognizing the existing rights of fishing communities is a fundamental element in building a successful fisheries management system” (Section 2.7.4 of the FAO Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries No. 10 on Increasing the Contribution of Small-Scale Fisheries to Poverty Alleviation and Food Security, FAO, 2005)

“When designing management measures, it might be appropriate to consider those which provide exclusive or preferential access for small-scale fisheries (Section 2.7.6 of the FAO Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries No. 10 on Increasing the Contribution of Small-Scale Fisheries to Poverty Alleviation and Food Security, FAO, 2005)

“A wider recognition of the importance of small-scale fisheries would also help to ensure that international trade regulations and agreements are more carefully structured so as to provide benefits to small-scale fisheries rather than resulting in their marginalization” (Section 2.8.4.1 of the FAO Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries No. 10 on Increasing the Contribution of Small-Scale Fisheries to Poverty Alleviation and Food Security, FAO, 2005)

*Source:* FAO. 2007. *Making global governance work for small-scale fisheries. New directions in fisheries – A series of policy briefs on development issues. No 9.* Rome. (available at [www.sflp.org/briefs/eng/policybriefs.html](http://www.sflp.org/briefs/eng/policybriefs.html))

The need for good governance applies to all levels of decision-making and implementation processes. Hence, governing fisheries involves much more than applying fisheries laws and policies. A fishery system is governed by factors affecting the rights and livelihoods of the people who fish, the trade in fishery products and services, the environment the fish live in and the national economic and political context within which the sector operates.

In the international arena, changes in governance regimes have been significant during the last decades. Many of these developments are of direct relevance to small-scale fisheries communities, including the 1982 United Nation Convention on the Law Of Sea (UNCLOS), sustainable development frameworks (1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development – UNCED – and Agenda 21; 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development – WSSD), the signing up to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), commitments to work through national Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), human rights conventions, food safety standards, and international trade agreements (World Trade Organization – WTO). In the fisheries sector itself, the Code – together with its related instruments and guidelines – is the main guiding instrument for governance (see Box 16).

These international developments are driven by an appreciation of local situations and are in turn influencing national and local level governance. However, the translation of global governance principles to strategies and actions at the national and local levels depend, to a large extent, on the willingness and ability of governments to reform and

implement changes in PIPs. Calls for improvement in governance, in particular in developing countries, have prompted many governments to initiate democratization and decentralization processes and to promote the rule of law and social equity. These processes, however, are still incomplete due to lack of political will, administrative capacity and/or financial resources.

The results of the SFLP poverty profiles showed how fishing community livelihoods are affected by factors and governance at higher levels, i.e. district, regional, national and international. There are also significant cross-sectoral linkages as livelihoods are often diversified. This calls for a need to establish micro, meso and macro linkages, i.e. linking communities with regional and national actors and initiatives and ensuring a two-way communication between the different levels. In order to achieve sustainable improvements at the local level, changes in PIPs are essential. Small-scale fisheries management and development issues need to be mainstreamed in national development policies and PRSPs in order to gain long-term sustainability. However, unfortunately, it not being reflected in national statistical systems, the real role and importance of small-scale fisheries in livelihoods and in terms of social and economic contributions are often not known by decision makers. This has a negative effect on the level of political incentives to invest in the sector.

Recognizing the weaknesses of conventional economic assessments with regard to small-scale fisheries, SFLP developed a methodology for reporting on the fisheries sector considering a wider range of economic and social impacts. Particular attention was given to recalculating the contribution of the fisheries sector to economic growth and GDP by including added value created by fisheries related secondary and tertiary activities (in particular fish processing and trade) commonly not included as a fisheries contribution in national accounts.

SFLP also contributed in other ways to raising the profile of the fisheries sector. The Programme reemphasised the sector's importance in food security and its potential to contribute to poverty reduction (see Box 16). By its work on particular vulnerability aspects, the attention to, for example, HIV/AIDS was increased at national, regional and international levels leading to changes in policies and new field level initiatives. Hence, within the global development system, SFLP has helped to increase awareness of small-scale fisheries and contributed to the shifting governance paradigm with regard to small-scale fishing dependent communities to include a more holistic, poverty focused and participatory approach. Increased awareness and visibility of the small-scale fisheries sector is fundamental for gaining political support for assistance and changes in PIPs. Moreover, it can be noted that although SFLP did not directly address governance per se – at least no using this terminology – many of the principles contained in the definition of good governance (see above) were central to the Programme's philosophy and approach. This was reflected in particular in SFLP's co-management initiatives.

## CO-MANAGEMENT

Conventional fisheries management tends to be centralised and implemented by command and control measures by fisheries departments. This top-down structure has also tended to be the system for national governance in general; for rural development as well as other sectors. However, as noted above, during the last few decades – and since the end of the 1980s and the early years of the 1990s in the West and Central African region – countries have been reforming their governance systems and moved towards decentralisation. This opens up for the possibility to introduce co-management arrangements in the natural resource sector, i.e. management systems relying on participation and collaboration among governments, fishers and other stakeholders.

While also implementing a large number of community focused activities at the national level, the main direct efforts made by SFLP on fisheries management were

## BOX 17

**How do fisheries contribute to local economies, food security and poverty reduction**

The fishery sector plays multiple roles in the national economies of West and Central African countries. A high proportion of these benefits are generated by the small-scale sub-sector which plays an important role in food security and poverty alleviation. The fisheries sector contributes to poverty alleviation and food security in several different ways. *Poverty alleviation* takes two different forms: poverty reduction and poverty prevention. Fisheries contribute to *poverty reduction* through wealth creation at the household level, as a rural development engine at the community level and by generating economic growth at the national level, including contributions to GDP, government tax income and foreign exchange earnings. The role of fisheries in *poverty prevention* refers to how the sector can help people stay out of or not fall further into poverty by providing a minimum standard of living and a safety-net function. This role is particularly important for small-scale fisheries in developing countries.

*Food security* is “when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (FSN Forum, 2007). Fishing contributes to food security directly – by producing highly nutritious food, i.e. fish – and indirectly, through the generation of revenues that can be used for buying food

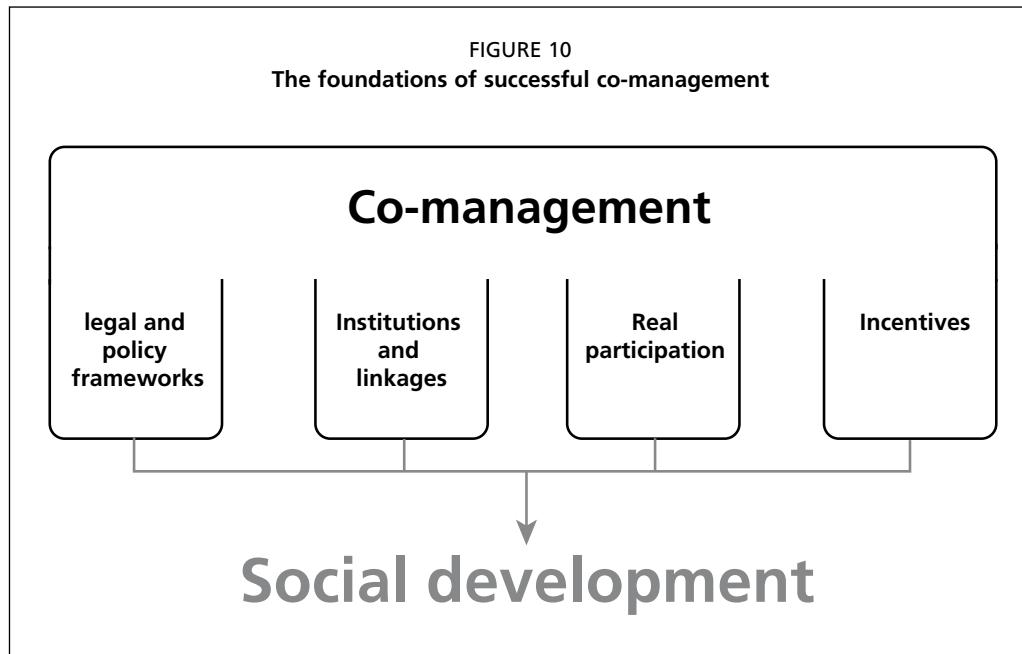
*Sources:* Béné, C., Macfadyen, G. & Allison, E.H. 2007. Increasing the contribution of small-scale fisheries to poverty alleviation and food security. *FAO Fisheries Technical Paper*. No. 481. Rome, FAO. FSN Forum. 2007. Glossary. *Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition Policies and Strategies*. Web page. FAO. (available at [www.fao.org/fsn/resources/glossary.html](http://www.fao.org/fsn/resources/glossary.html))

carried out through two subregional pilot projects on co-management, one in inland waters (Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Ghana) and one in coastal areas (Congo, Gabon, Guinea and Mauritania). While there had been earlier co-management initiatives in the region, they had tended to have a focus on improving fish stock management only. In line with the improved understanding of vulnerabilities and marginalization, the SFLP co-management projects used a more holistic approach embedding the need for fisheries management in a wider development context.

The SFLP experience confirmed findings from other co-management initiatives from around the world showing that successful and effective co-management systems are based on four interrelated pillars:

1. an enabling policy and legal framework, and continued government support;
2. effective institutions and linkages;
3. real participation by resource users and other stakeholders, avoiding elite capture and exclusion of minority groups; and
4. incentives for individuals to participate.

The need for an enabling environment, legal framework and political support relates to some of the discussion on governance in the section above. By reviewing current legal structures, SFLP found that while it was necessary in some situations to develop new legal, administrative and institutional arrangements, it was also often possible to use and interpret existing frameworks. However, SFLP's experience showed that even in situations where authorities had been formally decentralised, real decision-making power and resources had not always been reallocated to local communities. This was often due to a lack of information and capacity, both on behalf of fishing communities



and government representatives. Hence support to capacity and capability development had to be extended to communities and institutions in order for decentralisation to become effective.

An important part of this process was linked to the building of institutions and ensuring that the necessary linkages for communication were in place. Without functioning organizational structures at the local level, there are no effective recipients of the decentralised powers. A co-management committee may be created, constituting a forum for interactions among the co-management participants. To ensure community participation on the committee, communities need to be organized in a way that promotes equitable representation of diverse community interests. SFLP helped to establish and legalize local socio-professional organizations as well as umbrella associations as the basic institutional building blocks for the co-management arrangements. The attention given to obtaining official recognition of community groups and organizations was found to be particularly critical in order for community members to ascertain their rights and gain access to decision-making processes.

While some segments of the involved communities were already members of community groups and socio-professional organizations, others were found to lack the capacity and capabilities to self-organize. By providing, among other things, direct organizational development support, and literacy and numeracy training, more equitable participation was promoted. Notable outcomes from these activities included not only an increase in the number of functional community organizations but also in organizations benefiting from additional external training and microfinance service support, improved information flows within communities and the emergence of a democratic spirit.

The importance of creating incentives for communities to participate in co-management is directly linked with SFLP's approach of directly combining fisheries management with social development. When improving fisheries management, benefits in the form of increased catches and/or profitability are rarely seen immediately. On the contrary, introducing more responsible and sustainable fishing practices commonly means decreasing fishing effort. It may also imply investment in new more selective gear and participants in co-management initiatives need to spend time and effort on participating in the system. In particular for poor fishers and fishing households, this may not appear attractive, or even feasible, if no compensation for costs in the form

of forfeited production and time is provided. Recognizing that vulnerable people with uncertain futures are less likely to participate in fisheries co-management, which requires short-term restraints for longer-term gains, special efforts were made to address vulnerability factors identified by the communities themselves, such as HIV/AIDS, and lack of access to microfinance and diversification opportunities.

### ADDRESSING VULNERABILITIES

From the discussion above on the SFLP poverty profiles, it transpires that small-scale fisheries communities face a multitude of threats. By analysing poverty in a participatory manner a somewhat different picture from what may have been expected emerges and in order to enable fishers to engage in fishery management, it is essential to reduce their vulnerability by addressing other needs they identify. These needs include specific areas for action but also encompass addressing structural and organizational issues through PIPs and micro-macro linkages. The approach needs to be cross-sectoral including the use of strategic partnerships because constraints to achieving poverty eradication in fishing communities are found both within the sector and outside it.

### HIV/AIDS

Fishing communities have been found to be particularly vulnerable to *HIV/AIDS* because of a number of interacting factors, including high mobility, access to daily cash, sub-cultures of risk taking, and availability of commercial sex in many fishing ports. These factors are related to poverty and marginalization and the often limited access to health and education services in coastal and rural communities further increases the threat. As fishing communities and their specific needs are commonly not included in national poverty reduction strategies, they are less often targeted by development interventions. In spite of the high prevalence of *HIV/AIDS* in fishing communities and the cause and effect pattern that exists, fishing communities are hence rarely receiving adequate attention by *HIV/AIDS* prevention, care and mitigation programmes. At the same time, the threat of *HIV/AIDS* is not usually mentioned in fisheries policies and plans in spite of the effect the disease has on fishing communities and the social and economic contributions of the sector.

SFLP worked with actors at micro, meso and macro levels to raise the awareness of *HIV/AIDS* in fishing communities in Benin and Congo and to gather long-term support for the fight against the disease. Participatory diagnostic surveys and socio-behavioural studies were carried out and partnerships established with NGOs and development agents at district and national levels. Special communication activities were carried out; in Congo, Theatre-for-Development (TfD) techniques were successfully used to mobilise the community, facilitate interaction with and among community members and to communicate results to local leaders (see Box 18 for more on *Information and communication*).

In addition to showing the importance of engaging with lead organizations at the national level as well as local communities in order to be successful and sustain the efforts in the longer term, the SFLP experience pointed to the importance of regional collaboration. *HIV/AIDS* is not a concern maintained within national borders but a regional one because of the mobility of fishing communities. SFLP contributed to the formulation of a regional *HIV/AIDS* project that has subsequently received funding and started, building on and continuing the initiatives started by SFLP<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> "Fisheries and *HIV/AIDS* in Africa, investing in sustainable solutions" is a programme funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) and executed by FAO and WorldFish Center. The West and Central Africa component, managed by FAO, has a budget of US\$1.5 million over a period of three years.

## BOX 18

**Information and communication**

Information and communication (IC) are key elements cutting across all stages of any development process and the choice of IC strategies, methods and tools will have a decisive effect on the direction and results of most initiatives. The rapid development of IC technologies (ICTs) – i.e. technologies that facilitate communication and the processing and transmission of information by electronic means – has transformed today's economies and our daily lives; mobile phones and the internet, among other things, have become basic tools for communication. New technological applications are also being used across the fisheries value chains. Some are specialist applications with a particular role in fishing such as sonars for locating fish. Others are general purpose applications such as Global Positioning System applications (GPS) used for navigation and location finding, mobile phones for trading and emergencies, radio programming targeted at fishing communities and Web-based information and networking resources.

Effective communication and information sharing are key to effective participatory processes and SFLP took a broad approach to IC in its field activities. The Programme's community communication strategy was a holistic approach involving a wide range of actors, both vertically from local fishing communities to national administrations and horizontally across sectors. Communication methodologies varied according to target groups and objectives and included a large selection of tools. The use of TfD in the context of addressing HIV/AIDS in Congo is an example of a successfully chosen communication methodology (see above).

SFLP also productively used ICTs in its interventions. In Burkina Faso and Mali, local radio stations were supported to become more adapted to the needs of fishing communities. In the Gambia and Chad, the Programme supported the expansion of the local mobile phone network to also cover fishing communities. When introducing participatory monitoring, control and surveillance in Guinean waters, GPS, radios and mobile phones were used successfully by local partner fishers.

A responsible use of ICTs can contribute to enhanced livelihoods and sustainable development. However, it is important to recognize that there are also risks and potentially negative impacts arising from the introduction of technologies. Their introduction and promotion should clearly support the needs of the poor and promote equitable development and more responsible fishing.

Source: FAO. 2007. *Information and communication technologies benefit fishing communities. New directions in fisheries – A series of policy briefs on development issues. No. 7.* Rome, FAO. (available at [www.sflp.org/briefs/eng/policybriefs.html](http://www.sflp.org/briefs/eng/policybriefs.html))

**Microfinance**

Also with regard to *microfinance* for fishing communities, SFLP sought partnerships and worked closely with already established microfinance institutions (MFIs). Not uncommonly, MFIs associated fisheries with high risks and could also be reluctant to extend credits to fishing people because of previous bad experiences. There was hence a need to support capacity building both in fishing communities and within MFIs. In communities, organizational development, numeracy and literacy training, business skills development and technical training were provided. MFIs were sensitised with regard to the special needs of fishing communities and vulnerable groups within these communities and encouraged to develop microfinancial services tailored to small-scale fishers and fish workers.

Successful microfinance schemes were commonly developed based on the concept of “tontines”, the traditional informal rotating savings and credit associations.

Microfinance products combining savings and credit facilities and providing flexible repayment schemes suitable to the reality of fishing people were generally found to be the most appropriate ones. An example of how microfinance products can be tailored to the needs of clients is the MFI in Benin that entered into partnership with a national NGO providing HIV and AIDS-affected households with psychological and social assistance, health care and access to antiretroviral drugs in order to be able to better support its clients with the disease.

In many of SFLP's interventions, the microfinance activities had an explicit gender focus. Women often play a prominent role in fish processing and trade and extending microfinancial services to women can have a strong impact on this part of the value chain. In some of the Programme's partner countries, gender analysis were carried out and gender-sensitive microfinance programmes developed, including support to, for example, literacy programmes for women (see also Box 19, p.164).

### **Diversification**

The SFLP microfinance activities were closely linked to the co-management projects, both as part of the wider social development focus and as support to *livelihoods diversification*. Although many coastal and lakeside communities are dependent on fishing and related activities as a main source of income, rural households in developing countries often use complex strategies and a combination of activities to secure their livelihood outcomes. SFLP experience showed that people who are able to diversify their income generating activities are better off than those who do not.

As fish stocks decline, fishing households may need to diversify their livelihood activities. The decision to diversify into new income streams – temporary or more permanent – can also be an independent, anticipatory, choice based on an assessment of one's own or household assets (or resource-related factors) and on the nature of the activity to be undertaken. Diversification has also often been used as a strategy by policy makers and resource managers to decrease the number of fishers. However, the success of such 'job substitution' approaches is doubtful. Diversification needs instead to be seen as part of broader approach targeting sustainable livelihoods where households are given the means and opportunities to create a 'household income portfolio' that is suitable for their particular needs. Successful diversification programmes need to be based on an understanding of who fishers are, what their livelihoods are, and what influences them. As with other activities addressing poverty, diversification should be seen as one component among others of a broader integrated and participatory approach.

### **THE PAST, THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE**

This technical paper has given an account of lessons learned generated during SFLP's ambitious undertaking to address poverty reduction and promote responsible fishing in 25 countries in West and Central Africa by putting SLA and the principals of the Code into practice. This last chapter has attempted to put some of the overall experience into a wider context of development and point to key learning from the Programme.

It is clear that SFLP has had an impact on development policy, more so on specific issues – e.g. HIV/AIDS – at the national level in some countries of the region but also more generally in the international arena. As development policy and the paradigms it is based on evolve over time, influenced by a number of factors, it is difficult to discern the exact role and magnitude of SFLP's contribution in the overall picture. Nevertheless, it is evident that small-scale fisheries are now benefiting from substantially more attention than some ten years ago and that their role in food security and poverty reduction is increasingly Recognized. The conference on Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries organized in Bangkok in October 2008 by FAO and the Government of Thailand in

## BOX 19

**Gender in West and Central African fisheries**

Conventionally, the most common picture of gender roles in fisheries portrays men as fishers – going out on boats to catch the fish – and women as fish sellers and processors on land. While this generalisation of the professional roles of men and women is largely correct, a closer examination of gender in fisheries reveals a more complex situation according to countries and cultural contexts. In some countries, like Benin, Congo and Mali, women fish or collect fish on the lake in their own boats. In other countries, it may even be a taboo for women to be on board a fishing vessel but they can own boats and hire men as crew. As fish buyers, it is not unusual that women finance the working capital for fishing trips against a guaranteed supply of fish when the catch is landed.

Still, women are often excluded from decision-making processes and resource management arrangements and have more difficult access to financial and other resources than their male counterparts. SFLP found that an important obstacle to equity in terms of control and access is linked to information and communication. Women tend to have higher illiteracy rates and their organizations are under-informed. Hence, women are often kept at the margins of development processes.

SFLP recognized that gender concerns exist at all levels, i.e. among households, communities, mid-level actors (NGOs) and at the national policy level and, in addition to local gender action planning, gender awareness training was an essential activity component at all levels. The Programme also noted that gender issues and relationships vary within communities and between subgroups of people. There are different categories of men and women and gender analysis needs to be part of a wider assessment of marginalized groups. Women as part of vulnerable groups need to be empowered in their roles and provided adequate support, e.g. literacy training, microfinance services, organizational development and access to decision-making processes.

Source: FAO. 2007. *Gender policies for responsible fisheries. New directions in fisheries – A series of policy briefs on development issues. No. 6.* Rome, FAO. (available at [www.sflp.org/briefs/eng/policybriefs.html](http://www.sflp.org/briefs/eng/policybriefs.html))

collaboration with SEAFDEC and WorldFish Center and with support from a number of important donors<sup>43</sup>, is one testimony among others of this development.

SFLP increased the awareness of SLA and of the Code. Interestingly though, DFID – the main promoter of SLA early on – has moved its development focus to governance and the concept of sustainable livelihoods is not playing the same prominent and visible role in policy statements as it did a decade ago<sup>44</sup> (DFID, 2008). Other development partners have moved in the same direction with major donors and international financial institutions tending to base their aid and loans on “good governance” conditions. This does not mean that SLA has no role to play, or that it has not had a role, but possibly the contrary. As was seen in the discussion above, the principles on which good governance is based and those of the SLA are clearly compatible and the use of SLA is likely to have contributed to the development of the governance paradigm. It should also be noted that some of the maybe more novel components of SLA when it was first introduced have now gained general acceptance, e.g. the way poverty is defined and

<sup>43</sup> See the FAO small-scale fisheries Web site at [www.fao.org/fishery/ssf/en](http://www.fao.org/fishery/ssf/en) which also contains information on the Conference.

<sup>44</sup> DFID's third White Paper is entitled: Making governance work for the poor (see [www.dfid.gov.uk/wp2006/default.asp](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/wp2006/default.asp)).

understood, and hence the need to explicitly talk about or use SLA may be superseded. Moreover, there have always existed different interpretations of the SLA and different agencies have used it or similar approaches under different names and with different emphases (Hussein, 2002).

The Code continues to be an extremely relevant document for fisheries governance throughout the world. It is also continuously being complemented and expanded by the development of additional guidelines, instruments and agreements. However, in spite of its universal character, the Code has a certain focus on single-species fisheries and high-seas fisheries management, i.e. marine industrial fisheries, probably because it was developed in parallel with the UN Fish Stocks Agreement and that most of the fisheries known to be at unsustainable levels at that time fell into these categories. For some developing countries where multispecies small-scale fisheries are a dominant part of the reality, the Code may hence appear less relevant (Westlund, in press). SFLP helped overcoming this apparent constraint and was instrumental in showing the usefulness of the Code principles in a developing country and poor community context. At the same time, the Programme contributed to the development of specific technical guidelines for small-scale fisheries<sup>45</sup> as well as the increased overall attention to the importance of the subsector as mentioned above.

As has already been mentioned, SFLP was an unusually ambitious programme and while a number of important achievements can be demonstrated and a foundation was laid, a lot remains to be done before it can be claimed that sustainable livelihoods and responsible fishing are now the norm in West and Central Africa. It is now the responsibility of national governments and international development partners to reconfirm their commitment to poverty alleviation and responsible fishing by learning from SFLP's experience and building on it for the future of small-scale fisheries communities in the world.

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<sup>45</sup> See FAO. 2005. Increasing the contribution of small-scale fisheries to poverty alleviation and food security. *FAO Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries*. No. 10. Rome, FAO. 79pp.

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# Glossary

## CO-MANAGEMENT

A process of (resource) management in which government shares power with resource users, with each given specific rights and responsibilities relating to information and decision-making.

*Source: FAO Fisheries Glossary ([www.fao.org/fi/glossary/default.asp](http://www.fao.org/fi/glossary/default.asp)) based on OECD (1996), Synthesis report for the study on the economic aspects of the management of marine living resources. AGR/FI(96)12.*

## GENDER

The relations between men and women, both perceptual and material. Gender is not determined biologically, as a result of sexual characteristics of either women or men, but is constructed socially. It is a central organizing principle of societies, and often governs the processes of production and reproduction, consumption and distribution.

*Source: FAO, 1997. Gender: the key to sustainability and food security. SD Dimensions. May 1997 ([www.fao.org/sd](http://www.fao.org/sd)).*

## GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP)

An aggregate measure of production equal to the sum of the gross values added of all resident institutional units engaged in production (plus any taxes, and minus any subsidies, on products not included in the value of their outputs). The sum of the final uses of goods and services (all uses except intermediate consumption) measured in purchasers' prices, less the value of imports of goods and services, or the sum of primary incomes distributed by resident producer units.

*Source: United Nations Statistics Division*

*([unstats.un.org/unsd/cdb/cdb\\_dict\\_xrxx.asp?def\\_code=63](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/cdb/cdb_dict_xrxx.asp?def_code=63))*

## LIVELIHOOD

A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living.

*Source: DFID, 1999. Sustainable livelihoods guidance sheets ([www.livelihoods.org/info/guidance\\_sheets\\_pdfs/section1.pdf](http://www.livelihoods.org/info/guidance_sheets_pdfs/section1.pdf)). Based on Chambers, R. and G. Conway, 1992. Sustainable rural livelihoods: Practical concepts for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. IDS Discussion Paper 296. Brighton, IDS.*

## MICROFINANCE

Microfinance means providing poor households with financial services (credit, savings, insurance, etc.) that allow for small transactions and sums of money.

*Source: Based on 'What is microfinance?', the Microfinance Gateway ([www.microfinancegateway.com](http://www.microfinancegateway.com)).*

## MICRO-, MESO- AND MACRO-LEVELS

- The **micro-level** means the fishing communities themselves. The main actors at this level are the households, basic community groups and structure, and community-based socio-professional organizations.
- The **meso-level** refers to the local development arena and includes organizations and their field workers working in and with the fishing communities. These actors

are generally decentralised technical services, local administrations, NGOs, other associations and trade unions, including also community-based organizations.

- The **macro-level** implies the national policy context. At this level, decision-makers including representatives for fisheries departments or ministries, other government bodies, national NGOs and private sector organizations are found.

*Source:* [www.sflp.org](http://www.sflp.org)

### **MONITORING, CONTROL AND SURVEILLANCE (MCS)**

Activities undertaken by the fishery enforcement system to ensure compliance with fishery regulations.

*Source:* FAO Fisheries Glossary ([www.fao.org/fi/glossary/default.asp](http://www.fao.org/fi/glossary/default.asp))

### **POLICIES, INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES (PIP)**

The institutions, organizations, policies and legislation that shape the livelihoods of artisanal fisheries communities. The idea of PIP goes beyond the social, political, institutional and organizational context of livelihoods to include the policy processes that influence livelihoods either directly or indirectly.

*Source:* SFLP, 2002. A primer on sustainable livelihoods in artisanal fisheries ([www.sflp.org/eng/007/pub4/aprimer.doc](http://www.sflp.org/eng/007/pub4/aprimer.doc))

This Technical Paper traces the experiences of the Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme (SFLP) and its objective to reduce poverty in small-scale fisheries communities at the same time as introducing responsible fishing. The SFLP, a partnership between the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and 25 participating countries in West Africa, ran from November 1999 to October 2006.

The document highlights important examples generated by the SFLP with regard not only to reconciling poverty reduction and responsible fishing but also showing how the two are mutually dependent and essential for sustainable outcomes. It provides a consolidated account of main lessons learned to serve as a source of information and inspiration for further work with small-scale fishing communities.



ISBN 978-92-5-106112-1 ISSN 2070-7010



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TC/M/I0448E/1/11.08/1700