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FISHERY COMMITTEE FOR THE EASTERN CENTRAL ATLANTIC**SIXTEENTH SESSION****Tenerife, Spain, October 22-24 2002****REDUCING POVERTY IN THE FISHERIES COMMUNITIES OF WEST AFRICA
THROUGH THE SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES LIVELIHOODS APPROACH**

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

1. Like most fisheries communities in Africa, the fisheries communities of the CECAF countries are amongst the poorest sectors of the population, and the most vulnerable to poverty. It was to help reduce poverty in these communities that the Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme (SFLP) was set up in November 1999.

2. Funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) and implemented by the FAO, the SFLP covers 25 countries of West Africa, of which 20 lie on the coast. The aim of the Programme is to reduce poverty within fisheries communities by improving their livelihoods through the sustainable use of resources and strengthening their human and social capital, and through the development of a more favourable institutional environment and public policies.

3. In November 2001, the SFLP held an international workshop on “Small-Scale Fisheries, Poverty, and the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries”, which attracted international scientists and experts, and representatives of the 25 countries involved in the SFLP, including the stakeholders, civil society, fisheries administrations and the ministries responsible for poverty reduction strategies. The meeting gave the participants a better understanding of poverty and its reduction in the fisheries sector, against the background of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) and the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF). It found that poverty is a complex and multi-dimensional concept which requires prior analysis and appraisal before any attempt is made to deal with it, and emphasised that, in fisheries, poverty is linked to factors which are both internal and external to the sector. Consequently, one of the main challenges facing those involved in the fisheries sector of West Africa is to establish functional links and networks to facilitate close collaboration between the different stakeholders.

4. The SFLP aims to achieve 7 outcomes:

- i. National fisheries plans and policies improved through adoption of relevant CCRF principles, and national poverty alleviation planning that takes account of fisheries community needs;
- ii. The capacity of communities and their partners to participate in planning and management for improved livelihoods increased;
- iii. Community-based co-management systems established and functioning ;
- iv. Ecosystems and the resources they support enhanced and/or protected;
- v. Economic and social benefits from the artisanal sub-sector enhanced;
- vi. Policies, institutions and processes informed by dissemination of SFLP experience and knowledge;
- vii. Effective institutional network for programme implementation.

5. This paper gives a brief description of the SLA, and, in particular, its objectives, principles and analytical framework. Examples are given to illustrate the SFLP’s activities in poverty alleviation within coastal fisheries communities, as are some of the lessons which can be drawn from these.

1.2. Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA)

6. According to the broadly accepted definition, livelihoods include the capacities, assets (including the material and social resources) and activities needed to live. Livelihoods are sustainable when they can withstand and overcome constraints and shocks, and maintain or strengthen capacities and assets, both in the present and in the future, without weakening the natural resource base.

7. The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach is a way of considering the objectives, the range and the priorities of development. Its overall aim is the eradication of poverty, seen in terms of both actual poverty and vulnerability to poverty. Its objectives are:

- More reliable access to natural resources and the better management of those resources
- Improved access to good quality education, information and technologies, to high quality training, better food and good health
- A social environment which favours cohesion and integration
- Better access to basic infrastructure and support
- More reliable access to financial resources
- An institutional environment which supports various livelihoods strategies and assures the promotion of equitable access for all to competitive markets.

8. The SLA is based on a number of fundamental principles. It is a **people-focused**, rather than resource-focused, approach. The use of natural resources is only one element of communities' livelihoods. **The SLA is based on their strengths**, integrates their livelihoods strategies and aims at achieving sustainable benefits that the communities themselves consider to be important.

9. The approach is **receptive and participatory**. The poor and vulnerable populations should themselves be the key actors in the development process. It is a **multi-layered operational approach**. It takes place within the communities and fisheries groups, within local and central institutions, at regional and world level. It establishes a link between the different levels (local, district and national) and the different sectors. It is **implemented in partnership** with the private sector, the NGOs and the Government. The SLA also aims at **sustainability**. It is only when the micro-macro links are fully operational that the four elements of sustainability (environmental, institutional, social and economic) can be achieved. Since it is both **dynamic and flexible**, the SLA recognises the dynamic nature of the livelihoods of poor and vulnerable populations; it is flexible and adapts to change.

10. Another important principle of the SLA is its holistic nature, which gives it the latitude to identify the most important desires and needs of the populations, independently of the sector, place or level at which they are felt. The SLA also recognises that there is a wide range of stakeholders, whose needs, aspirations and capacities are different. This does not mean that a holistic appraisal of the populations' livelihoods should always lead to holistic solutions. Indeed, thanks to the SLA, a good understanding of the environment in which the communities live helps to produce a better, and participatory, identification of the priority entry points for intervention.

11. The sustainable livelihoods analytical framework (figure 1) is a practical tool which helps to promote an understanding and assimilation of the approach, by encouraging an analysis of the actual livelihoods of the small-scale fisheries-dependent populations. It is also useful as a planning tool. The framework has five components: (i) the context of vulnerability in the world of the fisheries communities; (ii) their capital assets (social, human, natural, physical and financial); (iii) the policies, institutions and processes which affect their lives; (iv) the strategies adopted by the communities; and (v) the results they achieve or to which they aspire. The analytical framework provides a checklist of the issues of importance and shows how these are interlinked. It draws attention to the different influences and major processes, and underlines the multiple interactions between the various factors which affect livelihoods. It leads the users to think in a holistic way, rather than on a sectoral basis. Explicitly linking the micro and macro levels, it proposes an analysis of policies and institutions at every level, from the local to the national.

12. This definition of livelihoods, the objectives and principles of the approach, and the analytical framework have been widely used in the studies and participatory appraisals conducted under the SFLP by the National Coordination Units (NCUs) with the fisheries communities and institutions, in order to identify community projects or other Programme activities. A few examples of these SFLP activities are given below.

2. Examples of SFLP activities aimed at poverty alleviation

2.1 Pilot studies of the impact of policies, institutions and processes (PIPs) on the livelihoods of small-scale fisheries communities

13. The main objective of these studies, conducted in Senegal and Ghana in 2001, was to identify the strengths of the PIPs on the basis of which it would be possible to improve the livelihoods of the fisheries communities. The methodology used and outcomes were then communicated to other countries involved in the Programme at three sub-regional workshops organised in Dakar, Banjul and Libreville.

14. It was found that several factors external to the fisheries sector have significant impacts on the fisheries communities' livelihoods. They are vulnerable to the seasonality of catches or harvests, and others factors related to the exploitation of natural resources. Other constraints, such as natural disasters (droughts, storms, etc.) are less predictable and often more catastrophic in their impact on livelihoods. External factors linked to human activities (farming, tourism, coastal development, etc.) can also be harmful. Policies set centrally have major consequences on rural communities (e.g., decisions affecting the cost of inputs, the exchange rate of national currencies, etc.).

15. In the PIPs study in Ghana, attention was focused on the policies and institutions of the Ministries of Food and Agriculture, of Local Authorities, and of Rural Development. Understanding the various mechanisms and players involved in drafting and implementing the different policies will help to ensure that the fisheries communities' needs are better taken into account. The study also highlighted a lack

of information and communication between the micro, meso and macro levels. This is an important entry point for the communities to promote their viewpoint and be informed of policies implemented. As in Senegal, the study showed how various policies and institutions not directly linked to the fisheries sector have an impact on the lives of the fisheries communities.

16. The lessons learned from these studies made it possible to draw up a methodology guide for the NCUs on analysing the PIPs, with reference to the SLA. The studies also provided training for national experts in the area of institutional analysis. Some of the experts were then used as resource persons in other countries. This made it possible to promote regional cooperation and the better dissemination of the outcomes under the Programme.

17. A holistic vision was found to be essential in effectively supporting the communities in their attempts to make sustainable improvements to their livelihoods. In this context, the SLA has proved to be a powerful tool and relatively easy to use at the local level. It establishes a link between the vulnerability context, the capital assets, the policies, institutions and processes, the strategies followed and the outcomes achieved and expected. Once the community has chosen the entry point or points, the SFLP can support it by funding small projects. These projects must, however, form part of a general framework to improve the policies and institutions at all levels, helping the country to learn from the grass-roots activities and repeat those which are positive. Some examples of such interventions are given below.

2.2. Assessment of the impact of beach seines on the livelihoods of fisheries communities

18. Beach seine fishing is a practice widely used by the coastal fishers of Benin, Togo, and Ghana. It thus has a cultural, social and economic influence on the living conditions of these populations. On the request of these three countries, the SFLP funded a study to produce information on the knowledge available concerning this activity, and propose appropriate mechanisms for its regulation. The study involved each country collecting baseline data on small-scale fisheries and analysing the livelihoods of the fisheries communities which practise beach seine fishing.

19. The study confirmed and underlined the importance of the practice to the communities' livelihoods. It also recognised the damage caused to the resource by the intensive fishing of the juvenile part of the fish stock through the use of small-mesh nets. This practice endangers the renewal of some fish stocks and, consequently, the sustainability of the natural capital and the activities linked to the use of beach seines. One possible solution for those involved in this part of the sector would be the introduction of co-management mechanisms to promote the adoption of responsible practices, such as larger mesh sizes, reduced fishing, and the development of alternative activities.

20. In order to achieve this, the study recommended that an 18-month biological and socio-economic survey of beach seine fishing be conducted, with the active participation of the beneficiary communities. This survey is based on the entry points identified in the livelihoods analysis conducted in the three countries. It is expected that this research will provide relevant information for the drafting of a community-

based management plan to regulate the use of beach seines in the three countries. In addition to this, the fisheries communities which depend on beach seines also wish to diversify their livelihoods through alternative practices, both within the fisheries sector (the use of bottom gill nets and oyster culture in Benin, line fishing in Togo), and in other sectors (copra oil extraction in Benin, poultry production in Ghana).

21. Four communities were identified by the NCUs of the different countries - two in Ghana, one in Togo and one in Benin. The survey is based on community projects to look at, firstly, changing the mesh size used, and secondly, building up alternative activities. The results achieved by the communities will be taken to local and national institutions with the aim of improving policy in the area. In Ghana, for instance, the Community-Based Fisheries Management Committees (CBFMCs) are extensively involved in the implementation of community projects. The CBFMCs work in partnership with local NGOs to make use of the results achieved. Thanks to the adoption of a Fisheries Code which recognises the existence of the CBFMCs, the development of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activities, supported by the SFLP, will encourage micro-macro links with the aim of influencing national policies. This activity is conducted in collaboration with several partners: the Institute of Local Government Studies, and the "conflict resolution" component of the DFID-FAO Livelihoods Support Project (LSP).

2.3. Support for small-scale fishers in monitoring, control and surveillance of the zone set aside for small-scale maritime fisheries in Guinea

22. The SFLP approved a community project proposed by the NCU of Guinea to help small-scale fishers participate in the surveillance and protection of the zone legally set aside for small-scale maritime fisheries. The project involved the communities of three ports on the coast of Guinea: Koukoudé and Bongolon in Boffa, in the north, and Matakang in Forécariah in the south.

23. At each of these landing points, fishers from different vessels were recruited by the officials of the Port Development Committees (PDCs). In order to be recruited, the fishers had to know how to read and write in French, the official language of the country, and have good experience in maritime activities. They were trained for the functions which would be required of them in the project, and acquired new technical knowledge in maritime surveillance. Each PDC involved was supplied with communications and sea rescue equipment solely for the persons recruited. The PDCs, the National Union of Small-scale Fishers of Guinea (UNPAG), the NCU, and the National Centre for Fisheries Surveillance and Protection (CNSP) collaborated in the implementation and monitoring of the community project.

24. The project activities had a positive dissuasive effect. The fishers noted a drop in incursions by industrial fishing boats into the zone set aside for small-scale fisheries, thus reducing conflicts between the two groups. The usefulness of having small-scale fishers participate in coastal surveillance is now recognised by the CNSP, which is the national authority in charge of monitoring, control and surveillance activities.

25. The Guinea NCU intends to organise a national forum within the next few months at which the lessons learned from this experience will be presented and

discussed, in the presence of the stakeholders, donors, development partners, and representatives of other countries in the region interested in this approach. Moreover, the project's outcomes have increased the sector's visibility and the mention it is given in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.

2.4. Strengthening the technical and organisational skills of the Cotonou Fishing Port Community

26. Through the Benin NCU, the SFLP supports the community of the fishing port of Cotonou in a community project concerning the organisation and management of a professional association. The community chose the NGO, Oxfam-Quebec, from several candidates, to act as a service provider in the implementation of the project. The project has set up basic structures, composed of 9 sub-groups of stakeholders, divided according to professional activity. These sub-groups were provided with constitutions adopted at a general assembly. The members of the grass-roots sub-groups and two local umbrella structures (UNAPEMAB for the "landing point port" sub-zone, and the "Edjatcho Group") benefited from training in drafting the constitution and rules and regulations, and in organisational management tools.

27. According to the members of the management committee, the training helped strengthen the technical and organisational skills of the community members. The two umbrella structures were able to update their own constitutions and rules and regulations. The members of the management committee also felt that the project had produced some positive changes, with the inclusion of some stakeholders who had originally been neglected, new enthusiasm to participate in the associations, and awareness of the rights and responsibilities of the members of a grass-roots structure. On the initiative of the project management committee, the grass-roots structures set up were able to consolidate their cohesion with the introduction of income-generating activities. Thus the "Scalers" sub-group at the Cotonou landing point has just drawn up a biomass recovery project in partnership with the Solid Household Waste Management Project supported by Oxfam-Quebec (PGDSM-Oxfam-Québec).

28. The management committee has committed itself to supporting the NCU in ensuring the broad dissemination of the project's achievements. Thus, in August 2002, through the Benin NCU, the communities of the fishing port of Cotonou received representatives of fishing communities from Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

2.5. Support for the establishment of an empowerment structure for the fishing community of Agip base beach, Pointe-Noire, Congo

29. This activity concerns a project within the fishing community of Agip base beach, Pointe-Noire. The project resulted from a Community Action Plan (CAP) drawn up and adopted at the capacity strengthening workshop for members of the NCUs of Gabon and Congo organised at Pointe-Noire in April 2001. The participatory appraisal conducted in the zone revealed a lack of any professional organisation, which was gradually weakening the community's technical and organisational capacities.

30. The main objective of the project was the sustainable organisation of the population of Agip base beach through the establishment, organisation and training of an empowerment structure for the community, which lives exclusively from fisheries activities. The direct beneficiaries are the fishers, the women fish processors, and their families (approximately 3,000 people). The other members of the community and all the population of the Kouilou region will also benefit from the project, since the conditions will be created for improved fisheries activities.

31. The project involves awareness-raising and organisational activities by the fisheries stakeholders in socio-professional groups, and their training in planning, management, participation in decision-making and monitoring. These activities are conducted with the support of a local NGO. Thanks to the training provided, the main members of the professional groups are building up the necessary skills to ensure the sustainability of the project, the success of which will form a relevant entry point for sustainable profit-generating activities for the whole community.

32. It is interesting to note that the Agip base fisheries community includes not only local Congolese fishers, but also of many fishers of Beninois origin. They have a significant impact on the fisheries, and their inclusion in the empowerment structure should mean that the decisions taken by the two communities are accepted and respected. The project management committee consists of members of both the Beninois and the Congolese communities, and the socio-professional associations which are set up will come together under an umbrella organisation. Six associations – 4 Congolese and 2 Beninois - have held their constitutive assemblies. The umbrella structure is to be strengthened in terms of organisational development with the aim, amongst other things, of easing cohabitation between the Congolese and Beninois communities. Once it is fully developed, this structure could play an important role in the Fisheries Advisory Council, a consultative body set up by the State to promote stakeholder participation in decision-making.

33. The project is run and monitored by a committee made up of elected members of the community, including two women, a representative of the regional fisheries department, an NGO representative, and a member of the NCU. There is a link with the Cotonou fishing port project, through exchange visits to allow the Congolese to benefit from the experiences in organisational development of the umbrella structure in Benin.

2.6. Management of the Conkouati Nature Reserve, Congo

34. Situated in the Kouilou region in the south of Congo, approximately 200 km from Pointe-Noire, the Conkouati Reserve has a wide range of habitats and vast ecological wealth. The region extends from the Atlantic coast to the Mayombe mountains, covering broad savannas, dense forest, firm land and swampy zones, and including all types of aquatic ecosystems (sea, rivers, estuaries, lakes). The populations of the neighbouring villages live mainly from fisheries and hunting, and are in a constant state of poverty, despite the various development projects the region has hosted. The lack of any in-depth analysis of the situation, which could have led to the introduction of sustainable livelihoods strategies, may help to explain the failure of these projects which were aimed primarily at reducing pressure on natural resources.

35. If this objective were to be achieved, it would necessarily impose constraints on the population in terms of their access to natural resources, and thus would have an impact on their livelihoods. There is, however, a series of laws and regulations which includes a management plan for the Conkouati National Park, a natural resource management committee for Conkouati Reserve (COGEREN), a Charter on the co-management of natural resources in Conkouati, and Law 2-200 of 1 February 2000, regulating maritime fisheries in the Republic of Congo.

36. A study of the livelihoods of the communities bordering the park was conducted in 2002 with the support of the SFLP. This study analysed the fisheries and forestry policies and other relevant instruments, with particular emphasis on Conkouati Reserve. The NCU conducted a participatory appraisal of livelihoods using Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools. This led to the identification of a community project focused on two themes. One was the diversification of livelihoods of the fisheries communities of Conkouati National Park. The other concerned capacity strengthening for the existing fisheries associations and groups, to ensure their effective participation in the co-management of Conkouati Reserve in general, and the marine turtles and manatees in particular.

37. This work also involved the beneficiaries identifying relevant indicators for the development of their livelihoods. These indicators are related to the strengthening of their capital assets, the reduction of vulnerability, and the improvement of the various policies and institutions. The project, which was approved in September 2002, includes a partnership between COGEREN and a local NGO in activity monitoring.

2.7. Contribution of Research to sustainable livelihoods in small-scale fisheries communities

2.7.1. Background

38. The experience of the West African countries shows that the links between the small-scale fisheries communities, the research institutions and the decision-makers in the fisheries sector are weak. This weakness is increasingly being recognised and regretted. Over many years, research programmes have looked only at resource monitoring and technologies, underrating issues related to the small-scale fisheries communities themselves.

39. Against this background, the SFLP agreed to conduct a study on the past contribution of fisheries research to the decision-making process, in terms of resource management and poverty alleviation within the small-scale fisheries communities. The study was conducted by multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral research teams from the ministries responsible for fisheries and poverty reduction strategies, the support and extension services, professional organisations, non-governmental organisations and research institutions from six countries: Cameroon, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria and Senegal¹.

¹ The institutes involved are: IRAD/Limbe- Cameroon, CNSHB-Guinea, IPR-Mali, CNROP-Mauritania, NIOMR-Nigeria; NIFFR-Nigeria; CRODT-Senegal

40. The objectives of the study were:

- to assess the activities of the fisheries research institutions over recent years, in order to identify their contribution to the decision-making process in fisheries management and to improving the livelihoods of fisheries communities;
- to assess the level of involvement of the beneficiary populations in the identification of research needs; and
- to define the extent to which current poverty reduction strategies take into account the fisheries sector in general, and fisheries research in particular.

41. The methodology used involves data collection, group discussions, and participatory appraisals based on the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) and the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF). The study was structured so as to identify target groups and service providers in the area of small-scale fisheries research. It thus was able to establish the prospects for strengthening research's contribution to the adjustment of policies, institutions and processes (PIPs) to ensure that these reflect more closely the aspirations of the communities concerned. Some of the lessons learned by the participants in the study are given below.

2.7.2. Lessons learned

42. There is a general lack of mechanisms to allow the communities to make proper use of the results of research – this is often linked to inadequacies within the extension agencies.

43. There is incoherence in some government policies, which has negative effects on the communities' livelihoods. This includes, for instance, policies which support the development of small-scale fisheries in theory, but in practice ensure the promotion of industrial fisheries.

44. The professional fisheries organisations are still particularly weak compared to those in sectors such as agriculture and livestock.

45. Despite these inadequacies, there have been positive developments in the outlook and approaches adopted by the fisheries research institutions over the last 10 years. With respect to the PIPs, for instance, there has been a trend towards research systems aimed at the development and promotion of local rules for resource management, with strong community involvement. There are also some examples of direct partnership between research and fisheries communities, generally in cases where the professional fisheries organisations have good capacities.

46. Clearly, fisheries research can help to improve the livelihoods of small-scale fisheries communities through the development of technologies and knowledge, the strengthening of the communities' technical and institutional capacities, and the provision of the necessary advice for decision-making, both by the stakeholders and throughout the profession. It is certainly within the PIPs that fisheries research has made the greatest contribution. In certain cases, politicians have taken decisions, in the form of laws and decrees regulating the exploitation and rational management of

fisheries resources, on the basis of work and studies conducted by research (in Senegal, for example).

47. Despite this contribution, it must be noted that fisheries research has not always received the attention it merits in most of the countries concerned. The priorities of structural adjustment policies have forced some States to relegate it to a level of lesser importance. In the best case, the States have made its funding conditional on foreign aid, with a lower level of priority. In addition to this, the fisheries research institutions have been slow to make the necessary adaptations to promote development-oriented and demand-driven research, that is, research which takes account of the aspirations and needs of the communities concerned.

48. This situation has been exacerbated by the weakness of the professional fisheries organisations, which are not adept at expressing their aspirations or formulating their needs, and are thus further marginalised. Moreover, it has been shown that the institutions, and not only the research institutions, have worked without coordination, and with no clear or precise guidelines concerning the priorities in their programmes.

2.7.3. Development Possibilities and Recommendations of the Study

49. In order to establish a new position for research and to re-direct its activities towards priority programmes which meet the needs of the small-scale fisheries communities, the study recommends using the SLA principles and identifying a series of activities to be conducted. Priority should be put on disseminating the results of the study by means of sub-regional workshops, bringing together representatives of the countries which did not participate in the study. The aim of these workshops would be to analyse the study's implications regarding action to be taken to improve the contribution of research to the livelihoods of fisheries communities. These regional workshops could be conducted through partnerships with other sub-regional or international networks. The subsequent stage would be to promote pilot activities, with partnerships between research and the communities aimed at participatory technology development, and the exchange of information and procedures, based on the needs expressed by the stakeholders during the study.

50. It will also be necessary to support capacity strengthening for the research institutions in participatory methods, in analysing the impact of fisheries research, and in the area of communication, in order to ensure that the best use is made of the results of fisheries research. Finally, fisheries research must be aimed at development and demand-driven, and sustainable funding mechanisms must be found.

51. The results of the study are useful starting points for the strategic planning of activities related to small-scale fisheries, and particularly the contribution which research could make to sustainably improving the livelihoods of the communities concerned. In addition to sharing the conclusions of the study with the countries which did not take part in the study, the SFLP, in collaboration with those countries interested, could look at ways of implementing some of the priority actions identified.

52. Against this background, the workshop recommended that the representatives of the six participating countries should send a brief summary of the study's implications to the decision-makers. A preliminary version was drafted by each country representative at the validation workshop, and the final memorandum will be used as a basis for identifying priority activities. These activities will mainly concern capacity strengthening for professional organisations from the fisheries communities, encouraging partnership between research and its users, and establishing sustainable funding mechanisms for research.

Conclusion

53. The SFLP aims to reduce poverty in the small-scale fisheries communities of West Africa by generating improvements to the communities' livelihoods. This objective will be reached primarily through the development of the social and human capital within the fisheries-dependent communities, the participatory management of natural resources by the communities, and the development of an appropriate environment in terms of fisheries institutions and policies.

54. Since the Programme was set up, much has been done with the NCUs in terms of awareness-raising, capacity strengthening, and establishing links between the fisheries administrations and other institutions which have an impact on the livelihoods of small-scale fisheries communities. In the field, the Programme has funded 39 community projects in 19 countries, all of which were operational by October 2002.

55. Nevertheless, it is generally agreed that sustainable poverty reduction and improved livelihoods cannot be achieved in the 25 countries solely through local activities. When the SFLP was being set up, and in order to ensure that its impact would be sustainable, it was planned to identify strategic themes which would have a regional impact and could be taken on through partnerships between different countries.

56. These strategic themes are the subject of pilot projects. A first pilot project, approved by the Programme Steering Committee in July 2002, concerns the "Improvement of the political and institutional environment for the development of co-management systems in inland fisheries in Burkina Faso, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana". It will begin its activities by the end of 2002. Two other themes have been chosen by the NCUs, which also selected the participating countries. These are the pilot project on "Questions related to post-harvest issues in the fisheries sector" in which Cameroon, the Gambia, Senegal and Chad will be participating, and the pilot project on "Participatory fisheries management, including monitoring, control and surveillance in coastal zones", for which the NCUs decided on Congo, Gabon, Guinea and Mauritania. These two pilot projects should be formulated towards the end of 2002, with activities beginning in early 2003.

57. The SFLP also uses a complementary tool to the SLA in its pilot projects. This is the poverty analysis conducted during the planning phase in order to:

- Try to identify the target beneficiaries of the pilot project;
- Establish an information base on the livelihoods of the project beneficiaries;

- Identify potential indicators which would make it possible to assess the impact of the project on the livelihoods of the beneficiaries;
- Contribute to the detailed drafting of the planned pilot project.

It is based on the following elements:

- Capitalising on the existing knowledge base within institutions and the populations;
- Gathering information in a participatory manner from the ultimate target beneficiaries of any action planned.

One of the objectives is also to ensure that as many people as possible are consulted at the very beginning of the project, in order to learn the lessons of past experiences (both positive and negative) and to ensure that the activities have not been imposed, but rather jointly developed through the involvement of all the stakeholders in the appraisal process.

58. Another important element for the SFLP is the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), an approach which has been encouraged by the World Bank and the IMF since the end of 1999, and which concerns most of the poor countries. It consists of a multi-stage participatory planning process, which should, in the end, allow the poorest and most highly indebted countries to gain access to more favourable credit facilities and debt reduction programmes (the HIPC initiative).

59. One essential stage in this process is the drafting of the PRSP. Most of the SFLP's partner countries are now at the stage of drafting interim PRSPs, which are supposed to set out the main lines of the strategic framework for poverty reduction and specify the path to be followed in drafting the final PRSP. However, it must be noted that, here too, small-scale fisheries is scarcely considered, if at all, in the PRSP approach in most of the SFLP partner countries.

60. Given all this, the Programme attempts to identify entry points to ensure that greater account is taken of small-scale fisheries in national poverty reduction policies. An initial compilation was made from a significant number of national poverty reduction documents (17), and the NCUs' answers to a questionnaire on the inclusion of fisheries in the PRSPs. During the final quarter of 2002, a consultative meeting will be held with some countries of the region, to try to encourage the fisheries administrations and the ministries responsible for the PRSP to give more attention to small-scale fisheries in poverty reduction policies in West Africa.