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INFO-FLASH

the SFLP... on the move...

Niger - Integration of fisheries and aquaculture in national plan formalised

One outcome of lobbying by the National Coordinating Unit (NCU) of Niger is the full integration of the fisheries and aquaculture sector into the National Rural Development Programme and Poverty Reduction Strategy (NRDP-PRS). The sector is expected to play a strategic role in the nation's development process and a draft fisheries and aquaculture sector programme had been prepared in order to adequately meet the challenge.

To conclude the exercise, the NCU of Niger organised a national validation workshop of the fisheries and aquaculture component of the NRDP-PRS on 22nd and 23rd July 2004. Financed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the workshop was attended by 75 participants from the administration, fisheries communities (Zinder, Maradi, Tillabery, Tahoua, Diffa and Dosso), representatives of NGOs and finance institutions.

A team of consultants presented an overview of important small-scale and enhanced fisheries sites (over 1000 water bodies) accompanied by a work plan adapted to the Rural Development Strategy framework. Development needs in the areas of enhanced fisheries, fishing sites, aquaculture, value-added for fish products, livelihoods diversification, nutritional quality, hygiene and consumption at household level have been identified. These will be addressed through three development strategies, namely: (i) Enhancement of rural communities' access to economic opportunities to create the conditions for sustainable economic growth in the rural areas; (ii) Strengthening of information exchange on risks, food security and the livelihoods of the fisherfolk; (iii) Strengthening the capacity of the administration and rural organisations to improve the management of the rural sector. All these will be taken into account in the establishment of participatory natural resource management institutions. Contributions on health, nutrition and education were used to improve the paper.

Participants stressed the need for the administration to work hand-in-hand with regional organisations to ensure the appropriate review and integration of fisheries legislation in important small-scale fishing sites like the River Niger and Lake Chad Basins. The recommendations of a previous meeting on enhanced fisheries (Burkina Faso) were also to be integrated, and the proposal that future management plans be preceded by a gender analysis was adopted, as was the 25% women participation quota envisaged in all local institutions. The team of national consultants is now finalising the paper which will be presented to the Rural Development Strategy work group, and subsequently to donor agencies for funding.

SFLP Info-Flash

The overriding objective of the **Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme** is to provide the 25 member countries with the most up to date information on the activities of the Programme. Info-Flash is produced by the Regional Support Unit based in Cotonou (Bénin).

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Benin, Gambia, Niger - *Gender and micro-credit results validated*

As recommended as a follow up to the results of the gender studies conducted in four SFLP participating countries in 2003, another study was conducted on gender and micro credit in five communities: Agbodjédo and Kétonou (Benin), Tafouka (Niger) and Tanji and Albreda (Gambia). The objective was to obtain a better understanding of fisherfolk's credit needs, existing micro-credit facilities and policies, and their appropriateness in improving the livelihoods of fisherfolk. It also aimed to identify possible partners, strengthen community organisations and promote micro-finance policies that will help foster gender equity in fisheries communities.

The studies were conducted by national teams comprising consultants in gender and micro-credit finance institutions) in the countries concerned. Data was collected at community level, from microfinance institutions and from fisheries administrative and regulatory bodies. The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach was combined with the method for Socio Economic and Gender Analysis of micro-finance developed by FAO. This process facilitated the analysis of the marketing and supply chain for different fisheries products.

During the validation workshops organised in Benin, it was noted that the topic of the study was closely related to the ongoing research into the appropriate process for the provision of social services and improvement of access of the poorest to sustainable, well-adapted and gender-sensitive micro-finance facilities. Three action research project proposals were thus recommended as this was considered the best way for the institutions to sustainably adapt their facilities and policies to the needs of the communities they serve. These are now being prepared.

The study attracted the interest of new partners like the UNDP-ILO-financed "*Fight Against Social and Economic Exclusion*" (FASE) project in Gambia. Other possible partnerships and microfinance umbrella organisations were also identified in Benin and Niger to strengthen microfinance institutions. The results of the studies will be presented at the AKTEA conference to be held in November 2004 in Spain by the international Gender consultant.

Gabon - *Milembié project gets a mention on Radio Canada...*

The SFLP community project in Milembié, a small Gabonese fishing community 72 km from Libreville, caught the attention of Radio Canada recently during the search for a special feature on fisheries in Gabon. On 27th July 2004, journalists from the Radio held a direct interview with a RSU staff centred on this project whose aim is to strengthen the organisational skills of a fishermen and fishmongers association. The radio interview also highlighted some small-scale fisheries issues in Gabon: the poor exploitation of the small-scale fishing zone, the problem posed by the large number of foreign migrant fishers from Nigeria, Togo and Benin, and the strain this puts on poverty reduction efforts and employment opportunities in the small-scale fisheries sector. This opportunity was made possible by the close collaborative work between the FAO Information Division and the SFLP Information/Communication Unit.

... Government support sustained

The government of Gabon has provided the NCU with a 4-wheel drive vehicle. The contribution will make it possible for the NCU to improve the monitoring of SFLP projects in the country. The government has also disbursed the sum of 10 million F CFA¹ for the construction of a fish stall in a safe part of the Milembié landing site where fish for sale can be displayed. This most recent gesture is yet another demonstration of the commitment of the government of Gabon to integrate fisheries in its poverty reduction strategy.

Benin - HIV/AIDS study results

The SFLP financed a Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) study on HIV/AIDS in some small-scale fisheries communities in Benin towards the end of 2003. It aimed among others to initiate discussions on the effects and appropriate control measures of the pandemic in small-scale fisheries communities by focusing on the epidemiological and social implications of the disease in the communities.

A feedback meeting on the study was organised by the NCU of Benin on 3rd June 2004. In attendance were representatives of National AIDS Control Programmes, the Fisheries Department, delegates of the fisheries communities concerned and NGOs, including *Alternatives Communautaires* which conducted the study and presented the results. The major vulnerability and high risk factors identified were: (i) a high illiteracy level (73%) due to the low importance given to formal education, resulting in the high rate of youth labour, particularly girls; (ii) a high incidence of casual sex especially among the youths; (iii) ignorance, indifference and low uptake of known protective measures (37 % of youths do not use condoms); (iv) the negative impact of tradition on open discussions about STDs and HIV/AIDS (married women could not be interviewed); (v) frequent travels/migration to Nigeria and its implications in the spread of the disease, and (vi) the stigmatisation of infected persons.

In reaction, participants unanimously acknowledged the obstacle posed by tradition and highly recommended informal entry points like small traditional groups ("tontine" savings groups, family and friends circles, etc) to counteract its effects. The need for HIV/AIDS control efforts to extend across the Nigerian border communities frequented by the fishers was also mentioned. Finally, it was recommended that special attention be paid to gender aspect through functional literacy. The NCU of Benin is currently exploring partnership opportunities with organisations intervening in HIV/AIDS control and poverty reduction to conduct similar activities in other fishing communities.

Congo - In a bid to understand prostitution in fishing communities

As a follow-up to the HIV/AIDS Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) study conducted in Makotipoko and Pointe-Noire towards the end of 2003, the SFLP approved the commissioning of a further study on prostitution in the Base Agip (Pointe-Noire) fisheries community. This was inspired by a need for a better understanding of the

¹ US\$ 1 = 545 CFA F (August 2004)

social causes, perception and profile of prostitution in fisheries communities. The first of its type, the results are expected to feed the HIV/AIDS control strategy to be adopted for fisheries communities in the country in particular and the sub-region in general. A highly participatory approach is to be adopted by a multidisciplinary team of consultants comprising two public health specialists, fisheries extension officers and representatives of *Agence Régionale d'Information et de Prévention de SIDA* (ARIPS), an NGO that facilitates HIV/AIDS control activities in the community. Two theatre-for-development specialists were integrated into the team to train volunteering members of the community in local drama techniques and to prepare a forum-theatre performance as a part of the public validation session. The NGO ARIPS will launch 2 public radio programmes, one for launching the study, and the other to support the feedback session. A local radio station in Pointe-Noire has been contracted to cover the whole process. The National Council for AIDS Control (*Conseil National de Lutte contre le SIDA* - CNLS) will also use clips of the audio recording in its national AIDS campaign.

The results of this new approach will be integrated in the findings of a Livelihoods Diversification and Enterprise Development (LDED) project aimed at reducing the risks and vulnerability to the disease in fisheries communities, and to raise awareness for participatory research. It will also be documented, and an overview will be featured in a future edition of the SFLP Bulletin.

Nigeria - SLA and CCRF integration in college curricula gathers momentum

In response to the recommendations of national stakeholders, nine core trainers from Nigeria were trained on the Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) and the Code of Conduct of Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) from 28th to June to 27th July 2004 at the headquarters of the National Institute for Freshwater Fisheries Research (NIFFR) in New Bussa. The training was funded by the SFLP and facilitated by an international consultant. Course content included Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), relevant components of the National Poverty Reduction Strategy, and gender issues. The curriculum was jointly drawn up by specialists from the National Board for Training and Education (NBTE), the Department of Agricultural Sciences, the Federal Department of Fisheries and representatives of the farmers Association. It will be implemented in the second semester of the Colleges of Freshwater Fisheries Technology at New Bussa (Niger State) and Doro-Baga (Borno State). A two-week certificate course for field officers is also to be conducted within the same period. Over time, the experience may be replicated in other institutions all over the country.

Pilot Projects on Coastal Management and Post Harvest - National Team in place for Congo and The Gambia

The Pilot Project Coordinator of Congo has been appointed. He is Eugène Bagamboula, the former National Coordinator of the NCU of Congo. He will be assisted by A. Bakala Kiba. Also appointed as Pilot Project Coordinator of The Gambia is Sirra Njie, the former Operations Officer of the NCU. Their experiences in community organisation, gender and credit will be invaluable in ensuring the success of the pilot project. Their appointment will also guarantee a high level of continuity for SFLP interventions in their respective countries.

FAO Expert Consultation on the Role of Small-Scale Fisheries in Poverty Alleviation and Food Security

The 25th session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) held in Rome in February 2003 recommended the preparation of technical guidelines for increasing the contribution of small-scale fisheries to food security and poverty alleviation. Within this context, the FAO Fisheries Policy and Planning Unit and the SFLP organised an Expert Consultation in Rome from 5 to 8 July 2004 to develop the guidelines. Participants included developments experts in the small-scale fisheries sector in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Working session started with the review of a background technical paper prepared for discussions at the meeting by a team of consultants. This was improved upon with the field experiences of different countries, provided by participants. The technical paper was then used to prepare a draft of the Technical Guidelines targeted at decision makers, planners and small-scale fisheries policy officers, as well as the fishers and fishworkers themselves.

Recommendations at the end of the meeting included the development of a new Article on Small-scale Fisheries and Poverty Alleviation which will incorporate among others, components on (i) fisheries millennium goals; (ii) the integration of fisheries in national development and poverty reduction strategies; (ii) reinforcement of the rights of small-scale fishers, and (iv) empowerment of fishers through communication, capacity building and organisation. The team of consultants is currently finalising the first draft of the technical paper and Technical Guidelines for further review by the experts in September.