



Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme

SFLP Activities

Niger : National workshop on poverty reduction in fisheries

Background

Niger, which lies in the Sahel, has a population of 11 million, most of whom live in the rural areas. In 1992, it adopted a rural development policy to serve as a reference framework for public projects in the sector. Several sub-sectoral strategies and policies were drawn up concerning the decentralised, participatory and responsible management of natural resources. These included, in particular, the national environment plan for sustainable development, Niger's operational food security strategy and the implementing texts of the Rural Code. Unfortunately, very little attention was paid to fisheries in public development and poverty alleviation policies.

The need was thus felt for national discussions on ways of ensuring the better inclusion of the fisheries sector in these public policies, paying particular attention to promoting the sustainable management of fisheries resources with reference to the Rural Code, the "rural development" component of the Poverty Reduction Strategy and the decentralisation and community development initiatives.

Under the supervision of the Niger National Coordination Unit (NCU), a study of the Policies, Institutions and Processes (PIPs) which have an impact on the livelihoods of fishing communities was conducted by a multi-disciplinary team from different institutional backgrounds during the first quarter of 2003. The study is a contribution to the current institutional deliberations taking place in the country.

The objective of the targeted PIPs study was to contribute to the sustainable improvement of fisheries livelihoods by promoting a process of change within the policies and institutions which affect fishing communities. The policies targeted are related not only to the fisheries sector, but also to other areas, such as poverty alleviation and decentralisation.

The study focussed on 3 themes:

- Analysing the institutional environment which affects the livelihoods of fishing communities, with reference to the provisions of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) concerning community participation in fisheries management (with particular attention to the implementing texts of the Rural Code currently under preparation).
- Identifying entry points to promote processes of change within the policies and institutions for sustainable livelihoods in fisheries and involving fishing communities in the dynamics of local development.
- Promoting strategic partnerships aimed at the better inclusion of fisheries in poverty

alleviation policies, initiating the breaking down of barriers between sectors with regard to issues related to poverty in fisheries, and promoting the development of relations between the fisheries administration, civil society and other government structures involved in poverty alleviation in Niger.

The preliminary results of the study show that fisheries are an important component of rural development in certain areas of the country and contribute significantly to poverty alleviation. There are also opportunities for increasing the contribution of fisheries to poverty alleviation. [**Study report** [Read on-line](#) 1030 K - [download](#) 155 K zip - Available only in French]

Against this background, the Niger National Coordination Unit (NCU), under the aegis of the Ministry of Water Resources, Environment and Desertification Control, and with the support of the Regional Support Unit of the Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme (SFLP), organised a national discussion workshop on poverty alleviation in fisheries in Niger on 3 and 4 June 2003.

Objective of the workshop

The objective of the workshop was to work with all the partners (representatives of the central and local authorities, fishing communities, civil society and development partners) to initiate a process to improve the policies and institutions which have an impact on the livelihoods of fishing communities in order to reduce poverty in fisheries. [**List of participants** - [Read on-line](#)]

The first day was spent sharing and discussing the results of the study and having an initial discussion on the likely prospects for improving fisheries livelihoods. The second day was devoted to working group sessions to encourage discussion between all the stakeholders in fisheries and rural poverty alleviation. Three working groups discussed the following topics:

1. Priority actions to improve the livelihoods of fishing communities
2. A strategy for integrating fisheries into rural development and poverty alleviation
3. An approach aimed at the sustainable management of fisheries resources.

The workshop also took advantage of the National Forum on Niger's Poverty Reduction Strategy, which was held in Niamey on 6 and 7 June, to inform the various donors of the entry points identified by the PIPs study as ways of improving the livelihoods of fishing communities and promoting the better inclusion of fisheries in the Rural Development Strategy component of the Poverty Reduction Strategy to be adopted by the Forum. The awareness-raising and lobbying had begun during the run-up to the workshop, and was backed up during the National Forum on the Poverty Reduction Strategy during which the national institutions and donors (more than 200 participants) were to take part. To this end, a communication support entitled "**Fisheries in Niger: the current situation and possible action to reduce poverty in fisheries in Niger**" [[Read on-line](#) 136 K - [download](#) 23 K zip – Available only in French] was drawn up on the basis of the workshop results and included in the folders given to the participants of the National Forum on poverty in Niger.

Results of the workshop

During the discussions, the participants highlighted areas of particular concern related to the fisheries sector, such as access to credit, access to fisheries inputs, improved storage and processing techniques, and the stocking of fish ponds, as well as the constraints imposed by the absence of basic health and education facilities, and the low level of education in fishing communities, all elements which make the communities vulnerable to poverty.

The workshop also made it possible to begin a real process to change policies and institutions at macro level to make them more aware of the problems of poverty alleviation in fisheries. The discussions gave the non-fisheries national institutions represented a better idea of the importance and role of fisheries in poverty alleviation. Thanks to the approach adopted by the PIPs study, the Rural Development Strategy Preparatory Committee decided to add a fourth priority sector programme devoted solely to fisheries and fish farming.

At the end of the discussions [**Results of working groups** [Read on-line 50 K](#) – Available only in French], each working group presented the results of its discussions during a feed-back plenary session, after which the following recommendations were drafted:

1. In the context of the Rural Development Strategy, develop a fisheries and fish farming sector programme, with particular emphasis on the following points:
 - a. Organisational development in fishing communities
 - b. Management and rehabilitation of aquatic ecosystems
 - c. Access for fishing communities to micro-credit systems
 - d. Development of enhanced fisheries on small dams and rice-fish farming in hydro-farming projects.
2. Promote the inclusion of fishing communities in social programmes implemented by the authorities and NGOs (health, schooling and literacy programmes).
3. Develop a social and educational communication programme to promote fisheries.
4. Introduce general guidelines, a statistical monitoring system and an appropriate administrative and legal framework for the fisheries and fish-farming sector.
5. Set up a committee to monitor the results of the national workshop and ensure the proper functioning of the committee.

Through the PIPs study, the SFLP was able to initiate a process of recognition and inclusion of fisheries in public development and poverty reduction policies. The introduction of a fisheries and fish farming sector programme into the Rural Development Strategy (RDS) is very encouraging in this respect. The RDS is in fact the only framework of reference for the donors in funding rural development programmes and projects. Before the PIPs approach, fisheries were never specifically included. Today, the sector has its own specific programme, which represents a real opportunity for improving the livelihoods of fishing communities. The task now is to draft the fisheries sector programme, an exercise in which the PIPs study and the results of the workshop should form a good starting point.

Moreover, and as a result of lobbying by the Niger National Coordination Unit (NCU), fisheries are now eligible for HIPC funds. The sum of CFA 80 million has been set aside in the budget to support fisheries activities in 2003. The NCU is now looking forward to a televised discussion on fisheries and what the sector represents for development and poverty reduction in rural communities. This discussion will help attract more donor attention to the fisheries sector.

For further information, please contact: [Niger National Coordination Unit of the SFLP](#).

Other documents available:

- [Niger: bringing fishing communities out of poverty](#) (Liaison Bulletin N° 13/14)

- [Pêche au Niger : une production en dents de scie](#) (Journal Sahel du Dimanche N°1036 - July 4, 2003)
- [National workshop on the role of fisheries PIP in poverty reduction](#) (Info Flash N° 30, July-August 2003)
- [The Niger National Coordination Unit builds up its partnerships](#) (Liaison Bulletin N°12)

[Top](#)