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# Co-management

## Financing the co-management of fisheries resources in West Africa

*It is possible to finance co-management. The resources exist. To do so, one must be prepared to abandon the sectoral approach and embrace partnership. The decentralization process provides some opportunities that institutions and well-organized communities could explore at local level. A long term learning process should be envisaged for all stakeholders because of the innovative nature of the approach.*

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In order to meet their energy needs, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Mali have, like many other countries, embarked on the construction of hydroelectric dams on their major water bodies. The water supply generated through these constructions has sprung up as new artificial lakes, some stretching over very large areas. Among these are Lakes Bagré and Kompienga in Burkina Faso, Kossou in Côte d'Ivoire, Volta in Ghana and Sélingué in Mali. These vast expanses of water have been acknowledged to be rapidly developing fish reservoirs.

With the support of the Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme (SFLP), the four countries opted for the implementation of a fisheries management strategy that would involve both government agencies and fishing communities along the lake. This explains the expression 'co-

management', which refers to their shared responsibilities and the involvement of fishing communities in the definition of fisheries management objectives, and in the execution of activities and the evaluation of results. This was what led to the elaboration of a co-management plan. The most critical aspect of the plan is the need for sustainable financing which will require the mobilization of financial and material resources both within and outside the community. In May 2005, two studies<sup>1</sup> were conducted on the financing of lacustrine fisheries co-management and community development in Burkina Faso and Mali, with SFLP support. This article presents the activities to be financed, the persons (corporate and individuals) involved in the financing and resource mobilization strategies used.

### Co-management

### objectives

The [redacted] contribute the major part of income, employment and food of most communities along the lake. However, the biological data available for these water bodies, and the poverty profiles conducted in communities along the lake bring the following realities to light:

- | Fisheries resources are decreasing, not only because of environmental degradation, but also, and most especially because of the destructive fishing practices which pay little or no attention to the protection of the resource. The first clear signs of overexploitation were pointed out by the fishing communities. The fishermen themselves condemn the use of so many different types of fishing gears and their harmful effects on the resources. They complain about the small sizes of fish caught. They recognize that the quantity of fish caught during each fishing expedition is gradually decreasing.
- | The fisheries-dependent communities along the lakes are witnessing the gradual degradation of their livelihoods. Incomes are declining. Living conditions are becoming more difficult by the day. They are more often than not isolated (bad

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<sup>1</sup> Keffing Sissokho : *Analyse des mécanismes et stratégies de financement de la cogestion des pêcheries lacustres et du développement communautaire - étude de cas du lac de Sélingué au Mali*. Bamako, May 2005.  
Adama Deme : *Etude sur le financement de la cogestion des pêcheries et du développement communautaire des lacs*. Ouagadougou, May 2005.

state of rural roads) and find it difficult to gain access to basic social services. Members of the fishing communities seem to be second-class citizens.

Fisheries management is highly centralized. Technical Departments of the Administration define management rules. Exploitation modalities and control systems are defined only with a token reference to the fishing communities who are in fact the first users of the resource. The result is that the latter feel exempted from any responsibility for the exploitation and control of the resources, as they neither understand nor apply most of the rules fixed by the administration. At the end of the day, it's a situation of 'anything goes' where fishing practices are concerned.

The co-management option which implies that all stakeholders will be involved has the following two-fold objectives:

- 1 To promote sustainable and responsible fisheries management, with the participation of communities along the lake, government agencies and other stakeholders.
- 1 To improve the livelihoods of communities along the lake, through the creation of wealth and their integration in local development.

The promotion of responsible fisheries resource management refers to the capacity of all stakeholders in general, and government agencies and fishing communities in particular, to hone their collaborative partnership skills, by showing mutual respect and consideration for each other. It is however common knowledge that members of fishing communities are not well equipped (low educational level, low organization level, difficulty in understanding the administrative process, etc.) to participate actively in decision-making. Meanwhile, centralized management, a condescending attitude towards rural people, and a top-down approach still reigns at



the administrative level. All these constitute a cog in the wheel of progress towards responsible participation in the social dialogue necessary for co-management.

The improvement of the livelihoods of fishing communities depends on the willingness of members of the fishing communities to make the right choices that will help to guarantee them a decent living standard. It is however the responsibility of the public administration to guarantee a minimum of investment into socio-economic infrastructures that will make it possible for the communities to have access to basic services (education and learning, health care, administrative service, transport, security, etc.).

### Who finances what?

Almost every aspect of co-management has to be financed, especially the capacity building activities of stakeholders, productive equipment and socio-economic infrastructures.

The capacity building programme

for stakeholders is the first step towards the efficient and equitable participation of stakeholders in their shared management responsibilities. This programme mainly includes activities related to organizational development and the structuring of fishing communities. But it also includes activities to support the establishment of efficient management structures and to assist them to legalize their status.

Productive equipment is understood to include means of production purchased with a view to contributing to the creation of capital for primary stakeholders. They include canoes, fishing gears, fish smoking ovens, ice-making machines, transportation means, as well as production means required for livelihoods diversification.

Socio-economic infrastructures include social centers, health centers, schools, rural roads, rural electrification, water points, markets and landing sites, etc.

There are several sources of

financing:

- | The communities.
- | The decentralized local governments at the various levels.
- | National institutions: national funds, technical departments of the public administration operating in rural areas, NGO's, development projects, Directorates in charge of development, etc.
- | The private sector (for example: those involved in agro-business operations).
- | Micro-finance institutions (MFI) or decentralized finance departments (DFD).
- | The State: national programmes, international institutions, etc.

The study on financing the co-

management of inland fisheries conducted in Mali (see above) concluded that in order to mobilize the different financial resources, it would be necessary to set up a special fund to support co-management and community development, called 'Fonds d'appui permanent à la cogestion et au développement communautaire'<sup>2</sup>

In order to be efficient, financing should meet the following three conditions for sustainability:

**Institutional sustainability:** are the institutions and mechanisms put in place viable enough to sustain the process in the long term? Is their institutional foundation strong enough to initiate and pursue the objective to collect resources? Is the resource management style transparent enough to strengthen the confidence of members or partners?

**Social and economic sustainabili-**

**ty:** is the level of participation or financial contributions of members or partners determined in a realistic and equitable manner; in other words, is it based on their actual financial capacity? Does the economic environment call for a progressive mobilization of resources over a long period, or does it have a short-term vision (immediate and urgent need for a large amount of resources)?

**Environmental sustainability:** is the state of the resource and its level of exploitation enough to sustain large financial investments in the long term? Is the sedentarization level of the beneficiary communities enough to guarantee that the investments will be sustained?

## Financing mechanisms and strategies

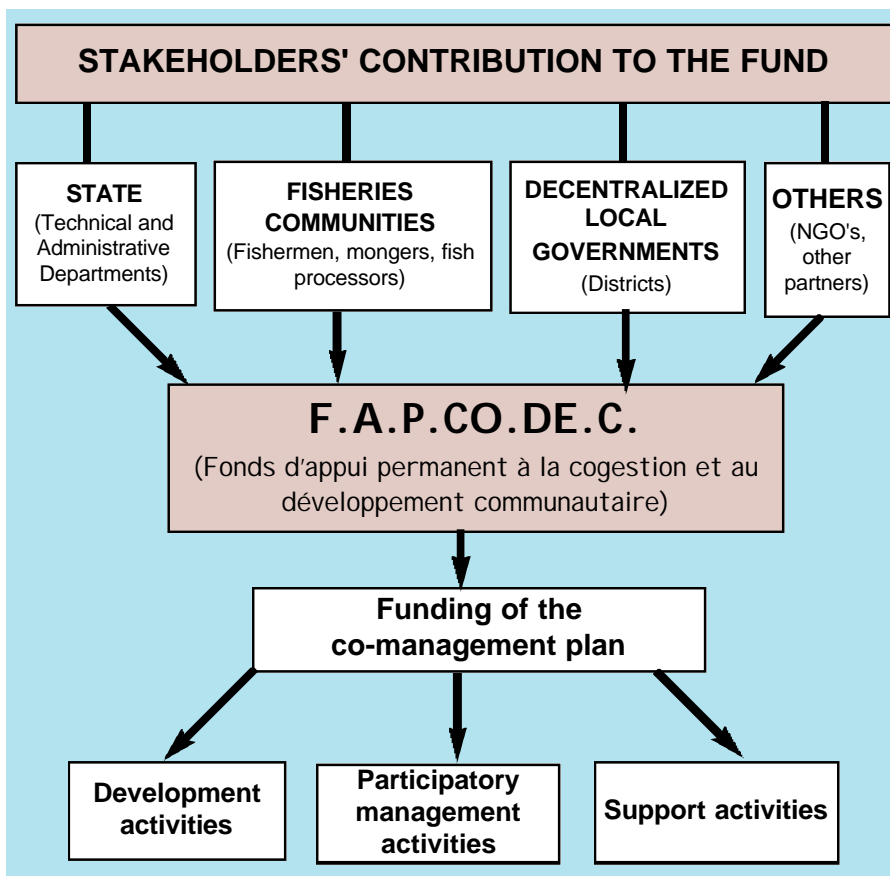
The mobilization of material and financial resources largely depends on the level of economic development, the legislative and regulatory environment, as well as the political environment of the country. The recovery of official resources would need to resort to the creation of new resources, or to the distribution of existing resources.

- | The creation of new resources:

At community level, contributions and levies are currently the approved practices. However, in spite of the relevance of the initiatives, incidents of bad practices (breach of trust) have made them suspicious. It would therefore be necessary to convince them all over again, get them involved, assign responsibilities to them, set clear and easily understood objectives that they can all relate to, guarantee transparency in management, and promote accountability.

At national institutional level: the mobilization of resources must conform to the country's development guidelines and priorities (the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, etc.).

- | The distribution of existing



Source : Study on financing co-management on Lake Sélingué in Mali

<sup>2</sup> Permanent fund for supporting co-management and community development.

resources:

At the level of decentralized institutions: this would involve the promotion of good governance at local level and based on equity. All the social groups have the right of access to the basic services. The local government or decentralized community should ensure that goods and services are distributed in an equitable manner that will benefit the generality of the population. Furthermore, some well-organized fishing communities may constitute themselves as pressure groups to negotiate for some specific interventions.

At the level of micro finance institutions : the savings capacity of the fishing communities is an asset that could help to guarantee their access to funds that could be used to finance their fishing operations (purchase of regulatory fishing materials, access to operating funds to purchase fish as well as fish processing and marketing equipment).

### Opportunities to finance co-management

It is possible to design different financing schemes for co-management. There is no universal recipe; but there is no doubt that these must be founded on some simple assumptions:

- | A lot of money is circulating in fishing communities; a consensus should be found to ensure that even a small part of this money is allocated to running the internal institutions of the communities.
- | Local government structures have to take into account all communities, including fisheries dependent communities. These should make themselves known, and their contributions to the economy and local development should be fully put into evidence.
- | The transparent management of public property: managers at every level should manage the properties of others who have placed their confidence in them honestly.
- | Every one is ready to contribute,

on the condition that the objectives set for the use of the resources are determined by consensus, and that there is a transparent management of funds.

Based on these principles, some examples can be cited. In Ghana, where the decentralization process has been ongoing for much longer, community-based committees and District Assemblies are discussing the nineteen-tax levy on fisheries or related activities. The whole chain has been taken into account (production, transport, marketing, processing, etc.). The taxes are negotiated between the fisheries community institutions and the local government. As soon as the money is collected, a distribution table

*ment of inland fisheries co-management systems'* is doing in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Mali.

In Burkina Faso, micro-finance institutions provide an important support to fishing communities. They contribute to the funding of activities at the levels of socio-professional organizations and households.

Finally, this is done in Mali by the Sélingué regional development office (*Office de développement de la région de Sélingué - ODRS*), the driving force for local development in the region. The fisheries resources project financed by the Arab Bank for African Economic Development (ABAED) plans to finance the



Photo : Moussa Sissoko

Each party has to be committed to financing co-management.

is negotiated between community-based committees and the district committees. The whole process is subject to the approval of the District Assembly.

In Côte d'Ivoire, a vocational training development fund (*Fonds de développement de la formation professionnelle - FDFP*) finances activities to build up the capacities of fisheries communities. However, it becomes the duty of fisheries communities support institutions to direct relevant institutions to fishing communities. This is what the Pilot Project on the *'Improvement of policy and institutional environment for the develop-*

construction of rural roads and landing sites, and the installation of cold rooms.

Co-management can be financed. It is important to seize every available opportunity, and to inform the different stakeholders about their duty to invest in the resources that provide them a living – in order to guarantee its sustainability. |