

Integration of the fisheries sector in national development

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Problem: insufficient consideration for the fisheries sector in national policies

The SFLP experience over the last three years has shown that the small-scale fisheries sector as a general rule is not given enough consideration in the national economic and social development policies. Furthermore, fisheries policies are guided by a sectoral approach where the human factor is still not considered as a significant aspect of the decision-making process. This is inimical to the sustainable exploitation of the resources, and increases the vulnerability of small-scale fishing communities. And what's more, fisheries stakeholders find it difficult to have broad scope when analysing poverty-related problems in fisheries and to seek alternative or complementary solutions outside the open access resource base.. For the SFLP all these different factors serve as entry points for promoting the preparation of sustainable strategies that are well suited to poverty reduction in the small-scale fishing communities of West and Central Africa.

The national Poverty Reduction Strategy preparation process initiated and encouraged by the Bretton Woods institutions – the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank – has been prominent in the poverty reduction strategies of West Africa. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) describe the overall policy and planning framework for poverty reduction. This framework guides the preparation of government's partial and annual budgets, programmes and policies.

The PRSPs provide opportunity for adopting fisheries policies in a more holistic manner, reconciling sustainable resource management, the fight against poverty in fishing communities and the contribution of the sector to economic growth. Within the context of Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA), this could be one of the major challenges in integrating small-scale fisheries in the PRSP and by extension in improving the consistency of government policies impacting on the sector, mobilizing partners to support the empowerment of communities, and providing an incentive to improve and decompartmentalize fisheries planning.

The need to consult the countries participating in the Programme thus became evident for understanding why the small-scale fisheries sector has so far remained in the background of the PRSP process, for evaluating the inherent advantages in further integrating fisheries in the PRSP (with reference to SLA and CCRF – the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries), and if necessary identifying the potential areas that the SFLP could provide support to assist the countries in this integration process.

Strategy developed to ensure better representation of the fisheries sector in national poverty reduction policies

The SFLP developed different initiatives to push for the integration of small-scale fisheries communities in the national poverty reduction programmes of West and Central Africa.

The process started by exploring the ideas and work done to reduce poverty in the small-scale fisheries sector of the West African region. This exercise was conducted during two sub-regional workshops on “Small-scale fisheries, poverty and the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries” held in Cotonou in November 2001, with the support of CEMARE (Centre for the Economics and Management of Aquatic Resources). An FAO working group of which the SFLP was a member examined poverty-related issues in small-scale fisheries, and the outcome of this exercise was the publication of a paper in the FAO series on Technical Guidelines for responsible fisheries.

Next, entry points were identified with a view to improve the integration of fishing communities in the PRSP using the SLA guiding principles, and develop partnerships with National Coordinating Units (NCU). This approach made it possible to undertake the following activities:

- Compilation of current national poverty reduction papers of the different countries, as well as information on the way fisheries stakeholders have so far been involved in the PRSP process.
- The first analysis of the PRSP process in the region and the linkages that were identified during this process with the problems of poverty reduction in fisheries.
- Collection of information on the place of fisheries in national poverty reduction strategies and how Fisheries Departments participate in the PRSP process.
- Organization of a Consultation¹ with the support of the FAO Fisheries Department, to analyze the status of the PRSP process and its linkages with poverty reduction efforts in the small-scale fisheries sector in West Africa, and to identify the approaches the SFLP could adopt in providing support to the integration of fisheries in the PRSP.

On this basis, the SFLP assisted the countries in obtaining information on the social and economic role of small-scale fisheries, and in the lobbying required to ensure that more consideration is given to the sector in national poverty reduction policies.

In this regard, a methodological guide was designed for assessing the contribution of small-scale fisheries to national economy. The purpose of the guide was to provide basic knowledge, as well as a low-cost methodology, to facilitate both the calculation of the economic and social benefits of the small-scale fisheries sector, and the full exploitation of the “strategic” information that the exercise could eventually produce.

The guide was tested in Benin and further developed. It was thereafter used to conduct fourteen case studies to assess the contribution of fisheries to national economies. These studies were conducted in the countries participating in the SFLP Pilot Projects. The first Pilot Project is on “Improvement of the policy and institutional environment for the development of inland fisheries co-management systems” in Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana and Mali. The second is on “Coastal fisheries co-management in Congo, Gabon, Guinea and Mauritania”, while the third is on “Improved livelihoods in the small-scale post-harvest fisheries” in Cameroon, Chad, Gambia and Senegal, and in two island countries (Cape Verde and Sao Tome & Principe). This activity made it possible to: (i) fill in the information/data gaps on the real and potential contribution of fisheries to national economies; (ii) develop in each of the countries, a close collaboration between the Fisheries Department and the office for national accounts, and (iii) arouse the interest of decision makers and development partners engaged in poverty reduction programmes in the fisheries sector.

Support was provided to some specific countries like Congo, Niger and Sierra Leone for the inclusion of the fisheries sector in the national poverty reduction policy. A study focusing on Policies, Institutions and Processes (PIPs) was conducted in Congo and Niger. The same study examined the institutional and economic issues that may have an impact on the livelihoods of fishing communities. Furthermore, as part of the activities supported by Pilot Project 2 a sectoral policy for poverty reduction was drawn up. In Niger a Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector Sub-Programme (FASP) was prepared as part of the Rural Development Strategy of the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS). This Sub-programme will facilitate the implementation of the strategy for developing the fisheries sub-sector, an integral part of the medium term action plan (MTAP) 2006 – 2011 resulting from a sectoral consultation on the environment and desertification control in November 2005. In Sierra Leone, the inclusion of ten additional areas for the survey on small-scale fisheries – the primary sample unit – in

¹ The countries represented in the consultation are: Benin, Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Gambia, Guinea, Ghana, Liberia, Mauritania, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe and Sierra Leone. Each national delegation comprised two higher officials, one of whom represents the Fisheries Planning Department, and the other, the institution responsible for preparing the PRSP.

the Integrated Survey on Households (ISHSL), with fifteen households per survey area made it possible to generate additional the information to supplement what was previously available for planning and for the implementation and monitoring of the national poverty strategy. It also helped to promote greater integration of fisheries in the PRSP, a development that would enable the fisheries sector to benefit from PRSP-related funds.

The results of the case studies on the contribution of fisheries to national economies

The results of the analysis and summary of the case studies on the evaluation of the contribution of fisheries to national economies show that this contribution is often under-estimated in most countries. The major reason for this is that all fisheries activities, whether direct or indirect, are not usually taken into consideration in the calculations. The approach used made it possible to integrate not only fisheries production, but also such activities as fish-processing, fish mongering and fish-catering. The integration of the secondary and tertiary sectors in the primary sector significantly increased the results and “weight” of fisheries activities in national economies. Overall, the value added in relation to fisheries production could thus increase by about 50%, when compared to the usual figures provided by the classical type of studies.

The relevance of the results is further buttressed by the development of synergy between the Fisheries Department and the office in charge of preparing national accounts. This will facilitate the work of updating the information available on the social and economic role of fisheries, and enable the regular participation of Fisheries Department in the different stages of the PRSP process.

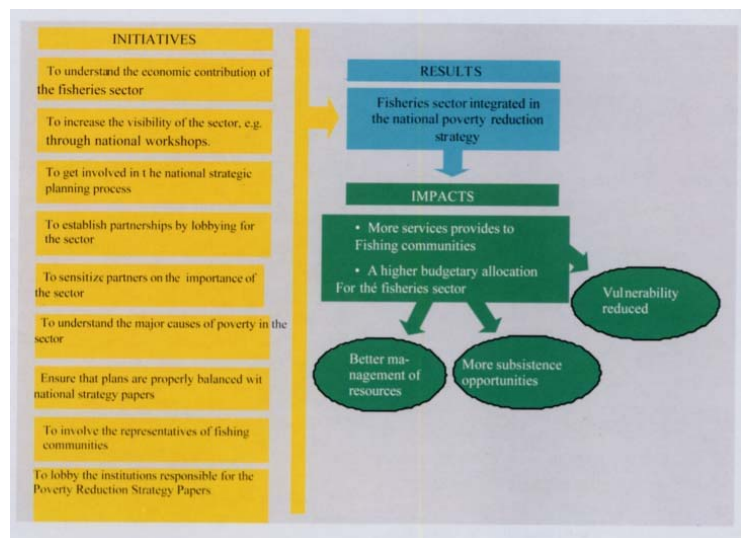
Lessons learnt

The support provided to fisheries stakeholders to prepare them adequately contribute to the PRSP through organizational development initiatives and the different training programmes, as well as the assessments conducted on the sector, which helped to generate relevant information especially on the poverty profile of fishing communities and the role of the sector in poverty reduction and food security, both helped to improve the inclusion of the sector in the PRSP in most SFP participating countries. This is particularly the case in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea, Mauritania and Niger.

The creation or strengthening of community-based organizations and national umbrella organizations, and the various trainings received contribute a lot to improving the negotiation capacities of the fishing communities. This made it possible for them to participate actively in the PRSP process, especially in the phase dedicated to incorporating their needs and aspirations in the Paper.

Advocacy work undertaken by the NCUs (National Coordinating Units) within the Fisheries Departments through the provision of information on the poverty level of fishing communities and the importance of the fisheries sector in terms of employment creation, income, food security and safety net, resulted in more visibility for the sector and led to its inclusion in national poverty reduction strategies. The preparation and implementation of a well adapted communication strategy, as well as the production of Information/ Communication (I/C) materials probably facilitated the lobbying exercise.

This improved visibility of the fisheries sector in national strategies shall lead to increased capital flow for the benefit of the sector, both for specific interventions in the fisheries sector, and for the provision of basic social services to the communities. This is of vital importance in reducing the vulnerability of fishing communities and in increasing the



opportunities provided through better basic social services like water, health education, transport, etc. In some countries like Cameroon, fisheries benefited from the HIPC (Highly Indebted Poor Countries) Fund in the form of a project aimed at the sustainable livelihoods improvement of these fishing communities.

The factors that contributed to the successful integration of the fisheries sector in the national policies and strategies can be summarized as follows:•