

Participatory surveillance in West Africa An essential ingredient in the fight against IUU fishing

On the margins of the 29th session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries, CFFA met with its partners, the organisations of artisanal fisheries in Guinea and Senegal, to assess past or current participatory surveillance projects in these two countries and make a series of recommendations aimed at improving the effectiveness of participatory surveillance in the fight against IUU fishing in West Africa.

In the case of **Guinea**, in order to fight against the incursions of trawlers in the 12 miles zone reserved for artisanal fishing, a pilot participatory surveillance project was launched in the early 2000', where some fishermen using VHF radios and GPS communicated directly with the National Centre for Surveillance, which could then faster arrest trawlers fishing in the prohibited area. The living conditions of fishers greatly improved: illegal activities were reduced by 60%, in particular the incursions of trawlers in the fishing zone reserved for artisanal fishermen, where these incursions were the cause of many fatal accidents. Unfortunately, the project, limited to the northern part of the coast, wasn't extended to the south (which caused displacement of illegal activities to the south), nor perpetuated as was demanded by coastal communities.

In the case of **Senegal**, participatory surveillance operates within the context of the co-management of fishing activities, in particular marine protected areas (MPA). Local committees that involve all stakeholders in communities have been established to implement participative surveillance. Pirogues (fishing canoes) are made available to work in cooperation with coastal surveillance. Coastal surveillance must act based on information provided by fishermen. A procedure exists to monitor cooperative actions involving national surveillance and maritime safety departments and the navy. Free telephone numbers are made available to fishermen to provide information on illegal operations witnessed at sea. Fines are paid directly to the public Treasury. Communities participate financially to the participative surveillance project (hardware maintenance, fuel, etc.) so that the project does not entirely depend on the State. Fuel is supplied to pirogues involved in this project through a voucher system. In addition, 40% of revenues of the fishing permits and the fishmonger's permits are allocated for the operation of the local committees.

It seems that there is now a commitment at the level of the Sub Regional Fisheries Committee (SRFC) to develop participative surveillance in the 7 Member States of the sub-region, particularly in southern States: Guinea Bissau, Guinea and Sierra Leone.

Artisanal fisheries professionals and their communities, united in CAOPA (African Confederation of Small-scale Fisheries Professional Organizations) wish to be actively associated with the development of such projects including through formal consultation between the SRFC, national authorities and professionals.

Recommendations:

Professionals, men and women of the artisanal sector demand the development of participatory surveillance, as a means to combat IUU fishing in their countries. They want initiatives to be implemented for this purpose, based on the following principles:

1. Involve the artisanal fishing professionals in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of participative surveillance programmes;
2. Use the experience of fishermen and other stakeholders who participated in the pilot project in Guinea and who are currently involved in participatory surveillance in Senegal;
3. Inform everyone (not just fishermen informers) in the communities so that people understand that participative surveillance is important for everyone;
4. Establish a specific legal framework;
5. Ensure the transfer of knowledge and skills so that communities can continue to work and perpetuate the project;
6. Recruit and train young graduates (many unemployed) that can support the collection and processing of data (including in electronic format);
7. Avoid diverting fishermen from their fishing activities when involving them in participative surveillance;
8. Ensure that surveillance officers have the necessary resources and support from administration to act efficiently on the basis of information provided by the fishermen. In particular (non-exhaustive list):
 - (a) Surveillance boats should be provided, adapted for different missions (deep sea, night patrols, etc);
 - (b) If patrol boats are not available, make pirogues available as is the case in Senegal;
 - (c) Adequate communication equipment for monitoring (Mobile phones not always sufficient) and training for maintenance of the material;
 - (d) Water and electricity (solar panels) supply should be ensured;
 - (e) Sea safety equipment should be available;
 - (f) Confidentiality modes of communication and transmission of information should be developed (codes, etc) for ensuring the protection of the informers;
9. Ensure the most comprehensive geographic coverage possible to avoid displacement of IUU problems from one area to another;
10. Publish lists of vessels authorised to fish in the EEZ of the countries concerned (as demanded in the Banjul Civil Society Declarationⁱ) as well as vessels involved in IUU fishing and follow-up action (at the level of the SRFC area).

Regional monitoring:

The problems are similar throughout the SRFC area. Harmonizing measures, pooling resources, training, is necessary but implementation should be done by zones (to avoid language problem), including in cross-border areas.

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ⁱ http://camfa-cso.org/EN/docs/BANJUL_CIVIL_SOCIETY_DECLARATION_EN.pdf