

# Improving the contribution of artisanal fisheries to food security: The role of women

18-21 November 2012

Grand-Bassam, Ivory Coast

Meeting organized by  
the African Confederation of Small Scale Fisheries Professional organizations (CAOPA)  
and  
the National Federation of Fisheries Cooperatives in Ivory Coast (FENACOPECI)

with the support and collaboration of  
Coalition for fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFA)  
Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC)  
Pain pour le Monde  
International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ISCF)  
Journalists network for sustainable fisheries in West Africa (REJOPRAO)

Report  
Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements (CFFA)



On the occasion of the World fisheries day, organized in Abidjan on the 21<sup>st</sup> of November 2012, CAOPA and FENACOPECI organized a 3 days prior consultation on the following topic: **Improving the contribution of artisanal fisheries to food security: The role of women**, bringing together women fish workers representatives of the small scale fishery sector, from 16 African countries, and other actors (FAO, NGOs, journalists...<sup>1</sup>).

The aim was to gather these women in order for them to share their experiences and to draw up propositions and recommendations for their governments and international organizations, and more precisely for their concerns to be taken into account by FAO in its International Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries.

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<sup>1</sup> See list of participants in annex.

► Prior to the opening of the debates, field visits were planned on Sunday the 18<sup>th</sup> of November.

The first one was the **Aquaculture site of Grand Bassam**. This site belongs to FENACOPECI. It exists since 1969 (the facilities were built up at that time) and was taken over by the current people in charge in 2007. The person in charge of the site is Mr Luc BEDJIRO.

The development of aquaculture in Ivory Coast falls in a more global objective which is the establishment of biological recovery periods, in order to provide for fish needs during these periods where fishing activities are stopped. The aim of this site is the production of fish for human consumption but due to the lack of funds, the aquaculture of exotic fish for aquarium has been developed, mainly for EU, USA and Brazil's markets.

These fish are fed with local vegetal products (a mix of corn, spinach and coconut) and not from fishmeal.

The basins are (theoretically) supplied by water from the ponds on the site (build in the lagoon) by automatic pumps. These small ponds in the lagoon are also used for fish breeding. However, for lack of financial means, the site doesn't work at all for the consumption production but the actors are still busy maintaining it.



Luc BEDJIRO underlined that participative management doesn't exist in Ivory Coast.

Then, the participants visited the **processing site of Abobo-Doume** (landing, fresh and smoked fish market, smoking and salting operations).

The working conditions of these women, fishworkers, are very tough. There is no landing dock and the women have to go into the sea to get the fish from the fishermen.

This processing site, whether for fresh, salted-dried and smoked fish, is extremely unsecure and unsanitary, with no facilities enabling the fish to be processed in good sanitary conditions and jeopardizes the health of the women working there (inhalation of smoke, facilities on the ground, no cold storage, etc.).

Participants could then exchange with women on the site and a meeting was organized at the cultural center where a presentation was given by **El Hadj Coume**, from the **National Agency on Rural and Agricultural Council (ANCAR)**, on **hygiene and quality issues of artisanal processed products**.

Fish is a perishable commodity and should be processed in a way assuring the protection of consumers' health.

Hygiene rule governing production should therefore be respected. Women processors will therefore trade a more competitive product, not harmful for consumers. Recommendations are made in that sense: 1) Hygiene : of the staff, of the workplaces and storages, of products and of the main additive – salt, of the environment and pre-emptive measures; 2) The quality of processed products; 3) Processing methods and 4) general advice on hygiene, what should be done and not done. A case study was presented on a fishery project called “Finalization of improved processing methods for a better valorization of fisheries products of the local union of Yenne Todd”.



► On **Monday the 19<sup>th</sup> of November**, the meeting was officially opened.

The speeches of the officials, organizers and partners were followed by thematic presentations, aimed at preparing the debates and coordinated by Miss **Chahbani Jawhara**, CAOPA.

The opening began with a traditional liberation ceremony, blessing, by the King of Moossou (Gd-Bassam), followed by welcome words from the officials (the Prefect since the mayor was absent – of Grand-Bassam), the organizers (**Michel Ségui**, president of FENACOPECI and **Abeid Sid Ahmet**, president of CAOPA), by the representative of women and member of CAOPA (**Kamara Marétu.O** from Sierra Leone), by one of the partners of CAOPA

(Francisco Mari, Pain pour le monde), by the FAO representative in Ivory Coast, who is also the gender focal point in West Africa (**Marie Noëlle Koyara**), and, at last, by the director of the Ministry of Animal and Fisheries Resources in Ivory Coast (**Kacou Denis**), who assured the support from its ministry for a greater welfare of small scale fisheries, a better cohesion and gathering of all, greeting the work of CAOPA and asking the organization to strengthen its links with FENACOPECI.

A **video presentation** from Mr **Olivier de Schutter**, the **Rapporteur of the United Nations on the right to food**, was shown, on **the importance of fisheries for food security**, regarding the report he handed in to the UN Secretariat on fisheries and the right to food<sup>2</sup>.

Its mandate to the UN is to promote the right to food. The report analyses the means to overcome impediments that the small scale sector is facing and submits some propositions and recommendations.

In its interview, he recognizes that the link between fisheries and food security was ignored for too long and that small scale fisheries are like ‘the invisibility in the invisibility’.

The aim of the report is to make visible the issues of small scale fisheries related to food security. Therefore, he highlights three parameters: 1) productivity requirement to face the rise of the world demand: invest in a sustainable way in this sector (improvement of aquaculture); 2) environmental sustainability requirement in order to head towards a more sustainable management of the small scale fishery sector, aware of the environmental issues and 3) social equity requirement, meaning that fishery management should reduce rural poverty and enable to get an income from.

Its diagnosis on the actual state of fisheries is quite alarming. First, the present situation is not bearable: overfishing threatens the capacity of fisheries to product in order to satisfy the growing demand (destructive practices like bottom trawling, discards, climate changes and acidification of the oceans which threatens the plankton and the fish capacity to renew itself). Then, increased globalization of fisheries due to bilateral agreements allowing access rights to industrial fleets in developing countries. He underlines that these fisheries agreements are sometimes unbalanced with a low capacity of these States to control the enforcement of these agreements. There is also a real lack of transparency in the use of funds received by these countries. Therefore, the World Bank suggested an initiative on transparency in order for governments to be accountable for the use of the license-fees from these agreements. At last, he underlines that some threats bearing upon small scale fisheries, such as the competition with mass industrial fisheries, development projects threatening coastal areas, pollution of marine spaces pushing fishermen to go more further in sea (increasing gas costs), the development of access rights vs. licenses (not always beneficiary to small scale fishermen) and the marginalization of small scale fishermen.

Eventually, three of the main recommendations for governments are the following: 1) fisheries agreements should be subjected to systematic impact assessments regarding food security issues, 2) small scale fishermen should be better protected in coastal areas and avoid competition between actors and, 3) support should be given to participative management of fisheries, including local populations in decision making processes.

Following this broadcasting, **Brian O’Riordan** (ICSF) reacted, emphasizing on the fact that, first there is an ECOWAS project “Afrique sans faim” but it doesn’t take fisheries into

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<sup>2</sup> Presented in October 2012. UN document, General Assembly, A/67/268, available here : [http://www.srfood.org/images/stories/pdf/officialreports/20121030\\_fish\\_fr.pdf](http://www.srfood.org/images/stories/pdf/officialreports/20121030_fish_fr.pdf).

account. Regarding aquaculture, he then insisted on the fact that it is only sustainable if it is not only made for exportation and if it is not based on fishmeal, otherwise it can be a threat to food security. Besides, fish breeding should also be sustainable. Considering the matter of international trade, it can be a cause of vulnerability for food security. He agrees with Olivier de Schutter on the importance (in number) of fishing agreements and their lack of transparency which often led to unbalanced competition between small scale and industrial fisheries.

Then, **CAOPA's General Secretary, Mr Gaoussou Geye** made a presentation on **"Small pelagics : basis of food security in West Africa"**.

It showed that, despite the important role fisheries plays in terms of food security in West Africa (income, food, exportation,...), local fishing communities are very frail, poor and marginalized.

Fish stocks and more precisely, small pelagic which are essential for food security, are, on the whole, highly exploited and some are overexploited (like sardinella and horse mackerel). The weakness of resources and local communities is worsened by pollution, especially at the mouth of rivers and due to the use of chemical products pollution coastal zones. Climate changes also have an impact on the coastline. Africa is the only part of the world where the availability of fish per inhabitant is declining, when it's already low.

Mitigation means are conceivable: 1) increase the contribution of fish to feeding, 2) support spirit of initiative in small scale fisheries and 3) invest in good governance (transparency, co-management, participation and decentralization).

This presentation gave ground to women to share their experiences and to highlight the problems they face, related to sanitary, facilities, lack of tools and need to organize themselves. Participants were unanimous on the fact that the site of Abobo-Doume was in a very alarming state. CAOPA's General Secretary insisted on the fact that it was part of the duties of the government to make sure that women could work in decent conditions (fishworkers and processors).

CAOPA understood very early fisheries issues and therefore created synergies at the level of professional organizations and incites women to get together.

En réponse à la demande de la représentante du Burkina Faso, le secrétaire général a affirmé que la CAOPA s'intéressait également aux Etats non côtiers.

Moreover, he stressed the important role of media. The network of journalists, REJOPRAO, was elaborated in order to face the communication and information difficulties<sup>3</sup>.

Then, **Micheline Dion, vice-president of FENACOPECI and President of women fishworkers of Ivory Coast**, made a striking presentation on **"The role of women in small scale fisheries in food security and the problems they face"**.

She provided the audience with clarifications and significant facts on the activities of women fishworkers. Indeed, these women operate before capture (meetings with fishermen to agree upon their financial needs (food, gas...) and make sure of their commitment). As a matter of fact, women finance fishermen. When fishermen are at sea, women are very active on land (preparing the ice, fire wood, bags of salt and other equipments and working tools in order to start processing as soon as the fish is landed).

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<sup>3</sup> See newsletter (in french) : <http://www.cape-cffa.org/spip.php?article298>.

Women are the first to welcome fishermen when they come back from fishing and post-harvest activities can then begin. At last, regarding selling and supplying, they have a tridimensional role : process, trade and management of the family unit.

Nevertheless, all these efforts to insure food security are not enough. They have to face multiple difficulties. For example, the losses post-harvest are linked to the lack of facilities and information (hygiene measures). The use of wood for smoking is harmful for their health. There is also a very low rate of literacy among these women who work with no rest in this noxious environment. It is almost impossible for them to manage the family unit and follow their children.

« We are not happy but we comfort ourselves in the fact that we have the lives of our children, our husbands, our population in charge ».

All these efforts have not been taken into account until now. It's only today that attention is given to these women small scale fishworkers.

Her intervention was followed by many grateful testimonies of women from various countries, supporting her words,

The exposed grievances will be circulated: these problems need to be solved.

The ultimate presentation was made by **Nicole Franz** from **FAO** on **“How can the international guidelines for sustainable small scale fisheries contribution to improve their contribution to food security?”**

FAO is in a process of drafting voluntary guidelines for small scale fisheries. A zero draft has already been produced, following public consultations organized with all stakeholders in various developing countries<sup>4</sup>.

The goal of these guidelines is to: 1) increase the contribution of small scale fisheries to food security, economic growth and the deterrence of poverty; 2) encourage self-sufficiency of small scale fisheries communities – men and women, and in particular marginalized and vulnerable groups – : give them means to participate in decision making processes, to beneficiate of their rights and bear responsibilities aiming at a sustainable use of resources and the improvement of means of existence and, 3) to provide with advice and recommendations, to establish standards and provide information to help stakeholders in improving governance and sustainable development of the small scale fishery sector.

These guidelines are made to have a worldwide impact but are based on developing countries. They concern marine and continental fisheries and deal both with production and post-harvest sectors.

These guidelines have to be considered in the light of existing instruments. Moreover, all stakeholders (governments, regional organizations, civil society organizations) are to be associated, meaning that it is a negotiated document, approved by all stakeholders and not imposed by FAO, especially considering the implementation of the final document.

Chapter 9 is dedicated to equality and equity between men and women, which is a crucial point because there is no document, today, focusing on the matter of equity between men and women in fisheries.

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<sup>4</sup> The 'zero draft' is available in English :

[ftp://ftp.fao.org/FI/DOCUMENT/ssf/SSF\\_guidelines/ZeroDraftSSFGuidelines\\_MAY2012.pdf](ftp://ftp.fao.org/FI/DOCUMENT/ssf/SSF_guidelines/ZeroDraftSSFGuidelines_MAY2012.pdf)

Consultations will be held until the beginning of 2013 in order to present a revised pilot study in March 2013 to be submitted to technical consultation in May 2013 and result in a final negotiated text in July 2014 for the COFI.

Once approved, each country will have to adopt a national improvement strategy (FAO will be present for any support, case by case).

The debates that followed the presentation reflected the concerns related to the concrete transcription of these guidelines once adopted, since they are supposed to be voluntary and not binding. It has therefore been stressed that national implementation strategies will need to be clear and well defined.

Other issues were discussed such as the fact that the guidelines should take into account the gap existing between countries of the South and of the North in terms of facilities, as well as the fact that in terms of trade, women face access problems to markets and this should be taken into consideration in the guidelines. Health issues were also discussed.

It should be noted that these matters were largely discussed on a dedicated workshop the following day.

Brian O’Riordan underlined that during the next steps of the development, NGOs would ask national authorities to change the participatory methods of civil society organizations in order to include them and enable them to send representatives to COFI with national delegations and take part of discussions.

CAOPA’s president, Abeid Sid Ahmed insisted on the fact that CFFA and ICSF allowed CAOPA to be present during the last COFI as observers. He also thanked FAO for the attention given to small scale fisheries, knowing that there is still to be done and that everyone should get ready to defend small scale fisheries and the guidelines to governments.

This first day was concluded by a **video** on the work of women in the **clam fishery sector in Tunisia**.



► On **Tuesday the 20th of November**, pursuing the works on the contribution of women to the improvement of their role in small scale fisheries linked to food security, in Africa, women representatives of this sector split in **two working groups**, in order to propose solutions (technical and political) to improve the contribution of small scale fisheries to food security in the following fields:

- **Access to resources** (fish, wood, coastal lands, etc.)

- **Access to market** (lack of conservation means, hygiene, transportation)
- **Working and living conditions** (smoke, children's education, medical care, etc.)
- **Involvement of women in decision making processes**

The first group focused on the two first points access to resources (fish, wood, coastal lands, etc.) and access to market (lack of conservation means, hygiene, transportation) and the second group on the two others: working and living conditions (smoke, children's education, medical care, etc.) and involvement of women in decision making processes.

As the outcome of the discussions where women shared their experiences in their own countries, general and common propositions were made.

Recurrent themes were addressed, on the lack of appropriate facilities at all levels, on the improvement of working conditions, on the lack of tools...

On the living conditions of women, concerns were expressed on the management of family units, on the organizations of child-care, on functional literacy, education of children and health care.

Conservation and management measures (biological rest, protected areas, opening of mouth, etc.) were suggested.

Aspects linked to migration and inter-regional/country transports were also emphasized. Indeed, there is a real problem of corruption at the check points (aimed to be sanitary controls) because ECOWAS's rules on free circulation are not implemented. Thus there is a need to ratify the TIR (on free circulation) convention (and need to create corridors).

One element was at the heart of the discussions, that is to say the relationship between men and women, still dominated by men. As a matter of fact, women are in a weak position (financial and capacity building) in order to operate in an equal manner on markets.

It has been suggested that a financial system should be put into place to assist women fishworkers in their activities (credits, mutual funds, education to financial management).

These propositions are aimed to be presented to governments. They will also be taken into account by FAO in the framework of the 'Voluntary guidelines on Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries', and to be integrated in the consolidated response of civil society (coordinated by ICSF).

During the closure debate, CAOPA's President committed to circulate them to NGOs and International organizations. The representative of the Ministry of animals and fisheries resources of Ivory Coast committed to defend the result this meeting works to its government.

On the eve of the world fisheries day, this meeting and these women dialogues representing the small scale fishery sector in Africa shows the importance of their role and the consideration that should be given to them.

Two presentations were then made.

The first one by **Philipp Nagel**, member of '**Coreoperation**', an organization based in Germany which assists developing countries in the use of video in communication in the field of small scale fisheries.

The second one by **Joseba Imaz**, in charge of the communication of the **World rural forum** who is organizing the International year of family farming, declared by the UN in 2011, developed by 360 CSOs around the world, in 2014.

The final goal of this event is to come to public policies that defend family farming and small scale fishermen.



Abeid Sid Ahmed then insisted on the fact that fisheries should not be drowned in agriculture issues.

The meeting was closed by a press conference.



► On the occasion of the **World Fisheries Day**, on **Wednesday the 21<sup>st</sup> of November**, celebrations were organized at the ‘Palais de la culture’ in Abidjan. Participants of the meeting attended the festivities and were welcomed by a music band and women of the site of Abobo-Doume, all dressed with the same boubou. They assisted to a lagoon parade of pirogues.

Afterwards, participants, plus women and fishermen, met up in the amphitheater where official speeches were held.

The speakers all congratulated women and other participants to this workshop who produced a remarkable work, aimed at make their voices heard to governments.

Michelin Dion read the Abidjan statement which summarizes the main claims of the workshops.

« We call on our Governments and on sub-regional, regional, and multi-lateral organizations to help us to address our problems, by:

- 1- Enabling the free circulation of fishery products between states;
- 2- Reducing and simplifying customs formalities;
- 3- Establishing, developing, and arranging adequate infrastructure;
- 4- Organizing adequate landing sites;
- 5- Providing finance to women processors and petty traders under fair arrangements;
- 6- Involving women in decision taking processes.

We further call on those of our States who have not already done so to ratify the Convention for International Road Transport (IRT/TIR) in order to improve the quality of our products.

With regards to the FAO led process to develop International Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small Scale Fisheries, we call on our States to:

- 1- Participate actively in the Technical Consultations due to take place at FAO in Rome in February 2013.
- 2- To include professionals from the artisanal fisheries sector in the official delegations for these Technical Consultations.
- 3- Request that COFI establish special modalities that allow for the participation of Civil Society Organizations in the Technical Consultations.
- 4- Engage in finalising the Guidelines scheduled for 2014 so as to ensure that they fully reflect the specific realities of artisanal fisheries”.

The ceremony was closed by the deliverance of certificates to the participants.



► **Thursday the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November** was dedicated to the in-depth study of **the international guidelines for sustainable small scale fisheries**, coordinated by **ICSF**.

The grounds for thoughts were the following: **“Women in small scale fisheries faced with regional trade of fisheries products in West Africa: which consideration for the international guidelines for sustainable small-scale fisheries? (IG-SSF)”**

The aim of the workshop was to discuss the problems that women are facing in regional trade of their fisheries products, in order to reach a consensus on the propositions to be formulated for the IG-SSF, to improve the recommendations of FAO.

First, **Brian O’Riordan** (ICSF) made a presentation to explain to participants the role of ICSF and others CSOs (World Fisheries Forum of People – WFFP, World Forum for Fishworkers – WFF, International Planning Committee for NGOs/CSOs for food security - IPC/CIP), coordinating the consultations.

These CSOs expect from the development of IG-SSF to reflect realities and aspirations of small scale fisheries communities. The drafting process is as important as the guidelines themselves since it will help make small scale fisheries more conspicuous and reinforce their representatives structures. The IG-SSF should have an impact worldwide and should deal with every stakeholders.

They should be based on a human rights approach and guide national and international efforts towards sustainable small scale fisheries.

Synthesis reports are therefore drafted from the consultations.

However, some of the propositions of these workshops are challenged and need further discussions. One of the main question concerns the implementation of these guidelines, at all levels, in particular to determine who will be in charge of it.

The topics to be further discussed are the following: 1) what are the main propositions for inter-regional trade and small scale fisheries – important issue in West Africa ? 2) Are there some specific requests from women in this field? 3) What are the main propositions regarding the gender issue?

Participants discussed over these topics, split in the same 2 groups.

The **first group** produced recommendations of **regional trade** on: 1) the financing of regional trade for women fishworkers and their activities (awareness campaigns and capacity building, especially of leaders, democratic and transparent system for the choice of leaders – access for young people; lobby/advocacy and mutual funds); 2) access to raw materials (wood, alternative means to transform fisheries products – added value and reforestation projects); 3) access to coastal zones (recognize the right of women to land access, to processing sites near coastal areas or with appropriate means of transportation); 4) access to markets (round tables, public consultations with the authorities, availability of fishing tools – decrease of taxes) and, 5) conservation and hygiene issues (storage stores for better conservation of fish, both on sites and at the boundaries).

Oh the whole, women wish to be involved in decision making processes related to management and conservation measures. They want products to be better preserved by conservation measures and ask that the guidelines to foresee education campaigns on hygiene and sanitary measures.

The debates that took place afterwards highlighted that it was important to improve the awareness of ECOWAS' rules.

The **second group**, on **gender, equality and equity between men and women issues, in small scale fisheries**, made some propositions on issues related to health, child-care, functional literacy, education/awareness, hygiene/sanitary, facilities, fair financing systems, awareness regarding IUU fishing, involvement of women in decision making processes, free circulation and non-discrimination in ECOWAS area and the use of media.

The debates that took place afterwards were mainly focused on the issue of education of children.

At the end of the plenary session that concluded the discussions on the international guidelines for sustainable small scale fisheries, a meeting between women was organized, linked to the preliminary works on the creation of the Platform of women from organizations members of CAOPA.

This meeting was chaired by Madam **Somplêhi Micheline DION**, designated for the occasion by the board of CAOPA as General coordinator of the Provisory Committee.

**Madam Céline Bipko from the University of Abidjan** was the moderator.

Mr. **Chérif Y. NDIAYE, technical support** of CAOPA, was invited to explain the idea of CAOPA and the existing texts governing its organization and functioning.

At the end of a long discussion, the creation of this platform was judged to be appropriate for most of the participants. Hesitations from the representatives of Burkina Faso and Benin were however registered, saying that this idea should first be discussed at the level of their national organizations before coming to a decision.

With respect to the Confederation's ideology, based on a consensual decision making, it has been asked to participants to convey the idea in their own country and to take the appropriate measures for the possible creation of this platform before the World Social Forum in Tunis.

**Annex**  
**Lists of participants**



**Improving the contribution of artisanal fisheries to food security:  
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Nsahotel Grand Bassam, Ivory Coast  
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Participants timesheet

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## ICSF/CAOPA Workshop on International Guidelines

### Nsahotel Grand Bassam, Ivory Coast

22 November 2012

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