

# West African Media and Artisanal Fishing Professionals: Raising awareness about sustainable fisheries issues

*Meeting held in Nouadhibou - Mauritania*

*4 - 7 September 2006*

Organized by

Union Nationale des Pêcheurs Artisans de Guinée – UNPAG  
Conseil National Interprofessionnel de la pêche artisanale du Sénégal – CONIPAS  
Fédération nationale des Pêches de Mauritanie – FNP – section artisanale

*With the collaboration of the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements  
Financial assistance: FAO FishCode Programme, CCFD, PRCM and SNLS*

## **Contents**

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Presentation of the organisers .....	4
3. Report of the meeting.....	5
3.1. How media and fishing professionals perceive each other	
3.2. Discussion on sustainable fisheries issues	
3.3. Initiatives by fishing professionals to promote responsible fisheries	
3.4. The role of the media in promoting sustainable fisheries	
4. Recommendations.....	12
5. Results and follow up of the recommendations.....	13

### Annexes:

*Annexe 1: Echos in the press*

*Annexe 2: List of participants*

*Annexe 3: Accounts and supporting documents*

## **1. Introduction**

In the recent years, West African artisanal fishing organizations, CONIPAS (Senegal), FNP – section artisanale (Mauritania) and UNPAG (Guinea) recognised that, in their communities, there is insufficient access to information relating to responsible fisheries. In the same way, scientists, decision makers and public opinion, do not take sufficient account of the views of artisanal fishing professionals, whether on social, economic, cultural issues, or on our relation with the natural environment.

Facilitating access to information is crucial for the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries by members of professional organizations, their families and the overall coastal community. It is also important to valorise, through improving information flows, traditional knowledge, and innovations proposed by artisanal professional in a perspective of responsible fishing.

Medias, radio in particular, - as it is widely listened to by fishing professional, even those who are not able to read-, but also newspapers and television, can play a bigger role to improve community access to information. But information must be presented in an appropriate format, so as to be of interest and accessible for all people from the community.

That's the reason why these artisanal professional organizations decided to organize a regional meeting between media and fishing professionals, to explore how responsible fisheries issues can be better publicized in coastal communities, and how communities' point of views and experiences for promoting sustainable fisheries can be better known and recognised, with media help. Given such support, coastal communities may get a better say in the decision making process.

The organisers are convinced that information appropriately tailored to the needs of coastal communities, and their participation in the creation of information is a necessary ingredient for the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. This is because fishing professionals are not only resource users but are also amongst the managers of these resources.

=====

## 2. Presentation of the Organisers

The **CONIPAS**, *Conseil National interprofessionnel de la Pêche artisanale au Sénégal*, created in 2003, unites the five organisations from the artisanal fishing sector in Senegal: *Fédération Nationale des GIE de Pêche du Sénégal* (FENAGIE-Pêche), *Collectif National des Pêcheurs artisanaux du Sénégal* (CNPS), *Fédération nationale des Mareyeurs du Sénégal* (FENAMS), *Union Nationale des GIE de mareyeurs du Sénégal* (UNAGIEMS), *Fédération nationale des femmes transformatrices de produits halieutiques et micro-mareyeuses du Sénégal* (FENATRAMS). The objective of CONIPAS is to intervene on issues such as resource management (control of the access, scarcity of the resources, etc), working conditions (security at sea, etc), professionalisation and improvement of performances for the processing and marketing sector.

The **FNP** (Fédération nationale de Pêche - Mauritanie), was created in 1992 and unites five fishery sub-sectors: artisanal fishing, industrial fishing, pelagic fishing, fish processing plants, services. The artisanal fishing sub-sector is autonomous and groups 4000 pirogues and 20 000 fishermen. It is composed by fishermen committees, fishmongers, inputs sellers, women fish processors. It defends its members interests and is concerned with the responsible management of resources, it participates in the establishment of fisheries management plans (cephalopods, shrimps, artisanal fishing), the implementation of biological rest periods, and the ban of non selective fishing gears such as monofilament and multi monofilament.

The **UNPAG** (National Union of Artisanal fishermen in Guinea) is a national association of fisheries professionals created in 1996 with the objective of supporting fishing communities to improve their working and livelihood conditions through the establishment of responsible fisheries. It is directed by a bureau of 22 members and groups 10 000 members (men and women) from all along the coast. Over the last few years, we have initiated and implemented a project of participative surveillance (linked to the DfID/FAO SFLP).

These professional organisations were helped to prepare and implement the meeting by:

- **Jade-Sénégal** and **Proximités Sarl** (Benin), two press agencies members of the international press agency SYFIA<sup>1</sup>, created in 1988, specialised in southern countries, particularly Africa.
- **CFFA**<sup>2</sup> (Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements), NGO network based in Brussels since 1992, which documents issues arising, for fishing communities, from ACP-EU fisheries relations.
- Preparatory meetings were held in Guinea and Senegal, facilitated by **ADEPEG CPA** in Guinea and Lamine Niassé (member of the **International Collective in Support of Fishworkers**) in Sénégal

Finally, this meeting could not have happened without the financial support of the FAO Fishcode program, the CCFD (Catholic Committee against Hunger and for Development), the PRCM (West African Regional Program for the Conservation of Marine Coastal environment) and the SENL SIDA/Secrétariat Exécutif national de lutte contre le Sida en Mauritanie.

---

<sup>1</sup> Syfia international website [www.syfia.info](http://www.syfia.info)

<sup>2</sup> CFFA website: <http://www.cape-cffa.org>

### **3. Report of the meeting**

68 participants, women and men, from fishing organisations, medias, non governmental organisations and administrations met, from 4<sup>th</sup> till 7<sup>th</sup> September 2006 in the Nouadhibou *Ecole Nationale d'Enseignement Maritime et des Pêches* (National Maritime and Fisheries School). The *Fédération Nationale de Pêche – section artisanale Nord* took charge of the practical organisation of the meeting. Foreign guests stayed at the hotel *Al Jazira*, on the shores of Nouadhibou Bay. The objective of the meeting: to establish a dialogue between media and fishing professionals for improving awareness on responsible fisheries issues.



*Establish a dialogue for responsible fisheries*

#### **3.1. How media and fishing professionals perceive each other**

After the official launch of the meeting on Monday September 4<sup>th</sup>, the debate started on two themes: how do artisanal fishing communities perceive the media and how does the media perceive artisanal fishing communities?

On how the media is perceived by fishing communities, men and women from the artisanal fishing sectors generally expressed positive views. For example when the communities have a problem that is ignored by the administration, the media can help get their views heard by the administration. Fishermen and women processors had one major reproach: sometimes the press speaks or writes without any knowledge. The press also needs to be more professional in understanding the specific nature of the fisheries sector. The condescending attitude of some journalists towards fishing communities was also denounced by some, of intellectuals towards those who work with their hands, and where the latter, particularly in the case of women fish processors, are often illiterate.

But the lack of communication between professional organisations and their members was also directly referred to as an obstacle in the way of artisanal fishing communities being well informed.

On the media side, a series of factors should be taken into account to explain their lack of interest in this sector. First of all, artisanal fishing communities tend to be traditional societies, where there is little in the way of novelty value, and it is therefore difficult to attract media attention. Then, the journalists commented that often the fishing professionals did not want to talk with them – that there is a certain lack of trust. The professionals explained that they are often afraid to speak, particularly on sensitive subjects behind which are hidden important political and economic issues, such as the devastating impacts of illegal fishing in the coastal zone. *“Everyone is fishing: the army is fishing, functionaries are fishing, ministers are fishing”*, said one professional from the artisanal sector during the meeting.

The media representatives emphasised that the press lacked structure: there is no networking amongst journalists, insufficient means, above all for the private press, and this is partly responsible for the lack of training and specialisation of the media on fisheries issues. The need for the media to be profitable, to cover their costs was also raised. The artisanal fishing communities are often unable to pay for journalists to come. Solutions must be found to this problem, either within the communities or outside. Nevertheless, to talk about artisanal fishing remains, as one participant noted, *“a blow for democracy, because it provides a voice for those who have none”*.

The question was raised about **who should approach who, the fishing professionals or the media?** If the media have to go to the field, it is also important that the communities respond to their interests. In that regard, artisanal fishing sector must show how its future is of concern to the society as a whole, particularly consumers.

The first day concluded with the visit of Nouadhibou autonomous artisanal fishing harbour. This visit really showed the participants that Nouadhibou is Mauritania fish capital. Artisanal fishing is particularly dynamic there. At the time of the visit, towards the end of the afternoon, tired crews arrived to unload their cargoes of octopus or enormous croakers. A large part goes to the nearby processing factories, from where it is exported to Japan or to Europe. In the port, women could be seen haggling with the fishermen over a few kilos of fish.



*Visit to Nouadhibou autonomous fishing harbour*

### **3.2. Discussion on sustainable fisheries issues**

#### *Eco-systems conservation, participative management, fight against Aids*

On the second day, attention was drawn to particular issues that should be focused on when raising awareness on sustainable fisheries.

To provide a framework for the discussion, a first communication was made by the FAO representative in Nouakchott about the FAO Code of Conduct for responsible fisheries. Even if most participants knew about the existence of the Code of Conduct, the majority of them did not know its details, and many participants requested, after the presentation, to receive a copy of the Code to be able to use fully its potential.

The day went on, enriched by a series of communications on themes such as the functioning of marine and coastal ecosystems, participative management, and the fight against aids in coastal communities. Animated discussions were punctuated by a regular Mauritanian tea service that kept participants awake and full of energy.

#### ***Echos from the Exchanges***

The discussion on the functioning of coastal and marine ecosystems was introduced by the PRCM (Programme Régional de Conservation de la zone côtière et Marine en Afrique de l'ouest) and illustrated by a film, produced by the Senegalese NGO Océanium, on the damages to the coastal eco-system made by monofilament nets lost in coastal waters.

Participants debated the various stakeholders responsibilities in taking care of these fragile coastal eco systems. Many denounced, for example, the continuous use of destructive fishing practices such as trawlers or mono filament, even when it is forbidden by law. Some remarked that monofilament, although its use is forbidden, is still available on the market without problems, highlighting authorities responsibility in adopting a coherent approach on this issue. How medias report on environmental issues was also discussed.

The next issue for debate, - participation of coastal communities in fisheries management-, was introduced by a presentation of the regional pilot project entitled “Coastal Fisheries Participative Management”, initiated by the FAO Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme (SFLP). Debate followed, first about how to develop a “responsible fishing culture”, but also about the necessity, illustrated by this initiative, for all initiatives to develop an information, education and communication strategy. In the SFLP initiative, this strategy was built on three communication dimensions: lobbying (institutional communication), social mobilization (communication for organized groups supporting a consultation process) and communication for change of behavior (for professionals as individuals).

As a result of this approach, it was said that fishing professionals were not feeling marginalised, but felt they were considered fully as citizens, with rights and responsibilities.

Finally, the Mauritanian association for the fight against Aids intervened to remind to the participants that health in coastal communities is also a sustainable fisheries issue. Fishermen practices, like migrating fishermen who go away from their families for long

periods render fishing communities particularly vulnerable to Aids. If treatment doesn't exist now, as was explained by the association, difficulties are still important mainly due to the fact that the disease is socially stigmatising, and it's difficult for people to say publicly they have Aids and accept the treatment.

Two visits were organized. Beginning of the afternoon, the visit to *Radio FM Nouadhibou* allowed participants, fishing professionals in particular, to see how this media functions on a daily basis. The director of Radio FM Nouadhibou also explained how fisheries issues were dealt with in the radio's programs. At the end of the day, another visit brought the participants to the processing plant SEPH. This plant, complying with international standards, exports its products to Asia and Europe.



*Visit Radio FM Nouadhibou*



*Women fish processors in SEPH*



### **3.3. Initiatives by fishing professionals to promote responsible fisheries**

The third day started by exchanging on initiatives taken by fishing professionals from the different countries for raising awareness on sustainable fisheries.

*Artisanal fishing professionals from Guinea* reminded that the Guinean continental shelf was the biggest submerged surface in Atlantic Africa, offering rich coastal fisheries resources, coveted by many foreign fleets. They highlighted the importance of the fisheries sector, the artisanal in particular, for food security and employment: 40% of animal protein consumption in Guinea come from fisheries, and more than 112 000 jobs come from the sector.

Artisanal fishermen are confronted by multiple problems: overfishing in the coastal zone, particularly by trawlers engaged in illegal fishing, numerous deadly accidents caused by collisions between these trawlers, - that fish by night-, and pirogues, non assistance to the victims of these accidents, etc. A film, made in collaboration with the Guinean artisanal fishing sector and local support NGO, was shown on the damages caused by illegal fishing in Guinea. Whilst the artisanal fishing sector keeps denouncing these facts, they have also been involved in a participative coastal zone surveillance programme, thereby contributing actively to the fight against illegal fishing.



*One of many boats engaged in IUU fishing, arrested in 2005 in Guinea*

Another central issue was raised: the problems encountered by women fish smokers to access fish supplies, given the scarcity of resources, and to find new markets for their products, and to process and package their products for such markets. Here, women took things into their hands and now have regular meetings between the different groups of fish smokers to inform each other about where to get the fish, where to sell it, at what prices, etc

By working in the field the media also play an important role, as was illustrated by the broadcasting of extracts of the “*Panier de la Ménagère*” program (“*Family Food Basket*” program). Journalists interview fisheries professional in their working environment to raise awareness amongst consumers about sustainable fisheries, using the fish found in the family food basket.

*Senegalese fishing professionals* then took the floor. Currently, the artisanal fishing sector in Senegal is going through difficult times: volume of catch and size of fish caught are decreasing, and processing plants have difficulties getting their supplies. This leads to loss of jobs, closures, increasing fishing communities poverty.

Many initiatives have been taken in recent years by fishing professionals to address the situation. These include: setting up of local fisheries management committees, involving all professionals who depend directly from a certain fishing zone or fisheries, setting up of artificial reefs, setting up of marine protected areas, etc

However, fishing communities are still suffering from a lack of communication on fishing policies. To address that, the CONIPAS elaborated a communication plan, taking into account grassroots communities and local fisheries committees, to facilitate the information flow. But this plan will not succeed without the efficient collaboration of private and public media. This initiative of professional organizations to design and implement appropriate communication strategies and plans was widely discussed.

*Mauritanian fishing professionals* described a particular case of artisanal fishing sector participation in fisheries management: the implementation of a biological rest period in the artisanal fishing sector. It was highlighted that such biological rest is also a rest period for the whole coastal ecosystem. The results of such measures, initiated and implemented by the professionals, were discussed. If catches rise just after a biological rest period, this improvement doesn't last for fisheries where fishing capacity is in excess. However, biological rest period is a measure easy to put in place and to control, particularly with the increasing use of VMS which will, in the future, allow a dynamic pattern of biological rest period per fisheries and per zones, with limited risks of fraud. In Mauritania, the biological rest is socially well accepted. This measure helps to structure different activities (fishing, maintenance, repairs etc) by forcing artisanal fishermen to carry out non-fishing activities during the rest period. The maintenance of the pirogues and the crewmembers' holidays are also programmed during the biological rest period.

These presentations per country led to comparisons of differences between the situations existing in the various countries, and on the way to address such differences, particularly through a continuous flow of information amongst stakeholders from the region, so to arrive at harmonized positions and common initiatives at sub regional level.

This third day finished with a cultural evening, where participants and representatives of the authorities were invited to share a meal under the *haima*, the Mauritanian nomads' traditional tent, whilst listening to a group of young singers from Nouadhibou. Their repertoire, a mixture of traditional and modern music, evoked the anxieties of young people for the future but also the fact that they are the country's future. This reflected well participants thoughts: the future of West African artisanal fisheries depends on fishing community youth!

### **3.4. The role of the media in promoting sustainable fisheries**

With regard to the role of the media in raising awareness of the need for responsible fisheries, several avenues were explored, like the need for the media to use a language appropriate for their interactions with coastal communities (using local languages, greater use of the radio to disseminate messages including to people who are illiterate).

Several basic issues were put forward for the media to take up, like the duality within the artisanal fishery, especially concerning exporting on the one hand, and resource management and environmental conservation on the other. The press can play a role in influencing behaviour within communities, promoting what is compatible with sustainable fishing. The press also have a role to play in highlighting the importance of artisanal fishing in employment creation for deprived social classes that have no particular training or expertise, or in the capitalisation and popularisation of experiences, good practices and innovations. For complex technical issues, like the agreement on hygiene or sanitary standards, journalists have a role to play in helping the professionals understand the issues that underpin technical questions. Finally a strong plea was made to tailor the collection and diffusion of information to the interests of young people and children, as the future of the sector is in their hands.

At the end of the four days, the first commitment made by the participants towards raising awareness about responsible fisheries was to create a West African network of journalists for sustainable fisheries.

And, before the final curtain fell, the Guinean women sang a farewell song, as is the tradition after a family reunion...

*«In five years time, in ten years time, whether alone or together, we would like to continue to eat these same fish that were served up during our stay in Nouadhibou, without being told that the price has increased because there is a scarcity, without being told that the species demanded no longer exist... the issue of sustainable fishery resource exploitation is not only the concern of artisanal fishing communities. It is a question of survival and of sovereignty for all...Responsible fisheries concerns everyone.»*

Extract from the concluding speech

## **4. Recommendations**

Participants at the “Workshop for West African Media and Artisanal Sector Professionals to raise awareness about responsible management of fisheries resources”, held in Nouadhibou, Mauritania from 4 to 7 September 2006, recommended that:

*Regarding the conservation of resources, States should:*

- ensure that responsible fishing practices are respected, in accordance with the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and ban trawling, dredging and the use of monofilament in the coastal zone;
- take all necessary measures to safeguard the environment and the coastal marine ecosystem;
- implement all provisions necessary for transparency, monitoring and control of illegal fishing activities;
- make public, through the media, information about illegal fishing practices (details of vessels, crew, flag, fine imposed, ship owner, etc) as well as the results of the penalties imposed.

*The Sub Regional Fisheries Committee (SRFC/CSRP) should:*

- associate and directly involve artisanal fishing professional organisations in its activities, in the decision-making process and in monitoring its programs;

*Professional Artisanal Fishing Organizations should:*

- consolidate internal democracy and ensure transparency and good governance in their activities;
- strengthen the participation of women in their decision-making processes;
- provide facilities for communication (fishermen’s centres, etc) awareness raising, education, information, and training of artisanal fishing communities

*A Communications Strategy should be put in place for all activities undertaken in the fisheries sector, including:*

- the creation of community radio programmes to inform the general public about fishing activities;
- publishing a regional paper devoted to all the aspects of fishing;
- the organization of specialized training courses for the media on fisheries issues
- Popularisation of fisheries research results carried out by oceanographic and fisheries related research institutions

## **5. Results and follow up of the recommendations**

Overall, the meeting provided opportunities to exchange experiences and points of view between fishing community representatives and media around responsible fisheries issues.

The role that West African journalists can play to better transmit these issues was discussed in detail and the constitution of a West African journalists' network for responsible fisheries is a first step to answer such concerns.

The networking between all participants, supported by existing discussion forums (such as the CTA e-consultation on ACP-EU fisheries relations) or existing networks (such as PRCM) will allow a better dissemination of fishing communities point of views on responsible fisheries issues.

Concrete proposals have also been put on the table, including a series of radio programmes on fisheries, journalist training, and their implementation is to be followed in the next months.

The report of the meeting, in French and English, will be largely distributed to decision makers, media and professionals. It needs to be noted that many press articles were published before, during and after the event in the national media of the region, ensuring a large publicity of the issues raised.

Finally, in terms of implementation of the recommendations, it needs to be noted that three weeks after the meeting, the three professional organizations were invited, for the first time, to participate to a Sub Regional Fisheries Committee meeting in charge of debating artisanal fisheries management in the sub region.

Contacted by CFFA, the presidents of UNPAG, FNP-section artisanale, and CONIPAS said they were very happy of the results of their participation to that meeting. The president of UNPAG insisted on the exchange of experiences between professionals, administrations and scientists that this meeting offered. *"Realities are different in each of the SRFC countries. But some have an experience in a particular area, and others can benefit from it. For example, in the case of Guinea, professionals would like pirogues to be immatriculated, and we have now been able to receive information about how this has been achieved in Mauritania and Senegal. If administrations, professionals and scientists join hands and share professionals experiences from the various countries in artisanal fisheries management, it will be very positive"*.

The president of CONIPAS insists on the fact that *"this opening created between professionals, scientists and administrations from the sub region is key for a sustainable management of the fisheries"*. Organising professionals at the sub regional level is also a goal. Thus, he explains that *"professional organisations attending the SRFC meeting proposed a federation at sub regional level of artisanal professional organisations... One issue being to see how to involve artisanal professionals from SRFC countries where a national organisation doesn't exist yet"*.

The president of the FNP-section artisanale expressed thanks, on behalf of artisanal professional organisations, to the SRFC for allowing their active participation during the whole meeting "*We have been able to express our point of view on all the topics that were discussed, and our concerns have been listened to by administrations, experts and scientists*". He welcomed this first opportunity which also meets one of the recommendations made by artisanal professionals and media.



*This report synthesis is from CFFA (October 2006).*

*Pictures have been kindly provided by PRCM. The picture showing an illegal fishing boat is extracted from the campaign material on illegal fishing in Guinea put together by Environmental Justice Foundation with the support of UNPAG and ADEPEG CPA (Guinea)*