



## Implementation of the FAO guidelines for sustainable small scale fisheries

*Contribution by Gaoussou Gueye, General Secretary of the African Confederation of Professional Small scale Fishing Organisations - CAOPA to the online consultation on the implementation of the FAO guidelines for sustainable small scale fisheries*

December 3, 2013

---

From the point of view of the professional small scale fishing organizations represented by the CAOPA, the implementation of the guidelines should be done **in consultation** with small scale fisheries stakeholders, and in a **coherent** manner both within the future African Union strategy for fisheries and aquaculture (which will be presented in February 2014 at the second Conference of African Ministers of Fisheries), and in national and regional policies.

We believe that there is an opportunity today for the African Union and the African countries, through the implementation of the guidelines, to strengthen the implementation of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

In our view, the following issues are the key elements that must be taken into account in the implementation of the guidelines in the Pan-African, regional and national policies context:

**1. Sustaining coastal communities and improving the contribution that small scale fisheries, particularly women, can make to food security**, is a strategic issue for Africa.

There are two important aspects to consider in this context:

The first is the issue of **access to resources** which are the basis for food security (such as small pelagics); interactions/conflicts between the various fleets (artisanal and industrial, local and foreign) and the development of access allocation policies that protect and guarantee the small scale fishers rights of access to resources, in particular **against the process of marine resources grabbing by the privatization of access rights**.

The second aspect to be considered concerns **the contribution of fisheries to food security**, with reforms needed at the level of trade policy (tariff and non-tariff barriers to regional trade in artisanal products); at the level of policies geared towards the recognition of the role of women in fisheries for the supply of the various markets. The objective of these

policies should be to ensure the complementarity between regional/local trade and international trade.

(Eco) labels should also be used to promote small scale fisheries products.

## **2. Concerted coastal zone management and co-management of fisheries**

Although there are numerous statements from our States about putting in place sustainable fisheries, our governments have often failed to develop management plans for our resources, in a way which is participatory and sustains artisanal fishing communities. The role of marine protected areas is to be considered in this context.

Currently, small scale fisheries target primarily coastal resources, which are often overexploited. A strategy and policy for developing small-scale fisheries activities further from the coast should also be looked into. This means for example reviewing existing legislation to increase the size of the artisanal fishing zone, to better protect it against, for example, the incursions of the trawlers. On longer term, small scale fisheries should also be enabled to develop offshore activities, - tuna fisheries for example-, so that our countries and our communities can draw more benefits from these resources.

On the other hand, our countries coastal zones are increasingly being occupied by other activities than fishing (tourism, industrial developments, oil and gas exploitation, etc.), which displace both the fishermen and women fish processors from the beaches. The protection of the artisanal fishing zone should integrate these aspects.

## **3. Transparency in the policies of access to resources and development assistance programs**

The lack of transparency in African fisheries policies, including in the allocation of licenses and fishing authorisations, leads to overexploitation of resources, detrimental to coastal communities. Transparency in this respect must become the rule, and should promote informed participation of stakeholders, in particular of artisanal fishing communities. Greater transparency is also an important tool to combat IUU fishing, which is thriving when the opacity and corruption are widespread, as is often the case.

On the other hand, there are many projects to support the sector, including small-scale fishing (World Bank, EU, NGOs, etc). So far, there are not many tangible results for our communities from these projects. Transparency must also be improved in aid projects, as the basis for the participation of the beneficiaries, - the coastal communities-, in the definition, implementation and evaluation of these projects.

## **4. Aquaculture**

Policies must be put in place to develop small scale aquaculture, based on the cultivation of non-carnivorous species (i.e. which do not depend on stocks of wild fish for the fishmeal), and with the main objective to strengthen the food security of populations in Africa.

## **Obstacles to the implementation of the guidelines in Africa**

A big problem is the lack of capacity at the level of the States, which is partly due to the lack of synergy between the different institutions, who often do their work each in their corner, repeating what others are doing. There is a need for a better coordination between these institutions, which should improve the overall institutional capacity.

There are also sometimes problems in the mandate given to the institutions.

For the management of shared stocks, such as sardinella in West Africa, no regional institution has today the mandate to manage these stocks regionally - that should be a priority. It would be also important to think in terms of large marine ecosystems for developing such regional management.

Many small-scale fisheries operate across borders, and sometimes this causes conflicts. Tools need to be put in place to better manage these transboundary fisheries and prevent and manage conflicts. For example, the CAOPA proposes the establishment of professional joint committees involving small scale fishermen from the countries concerned, drawing from the example of the Mauritania – Senegal joint committee which we put in place in 2008.

There is a real lack of capacity at the research level (lack of staff, little valued status, but also no collaboration between fishers and researchers). A participatory research could improve the quality of data and scientific advice. In the same way, participative surveillance is to be encouraged (examples in Senegal, Mauritania, etc), to better combat IUU fishing (incursion of trawlers) in the coastal zone.

## **What role can African small-scale fishing play in the implementation of the guidelines**

Currently, in most African countries, small-scale fisheries remains marginalized in decision-making, due to the lack of recognition of its potential as an engine of sustainable development.

The CAOPA, which consists of organisations of small scale fisheries professionals only, wants to give a response to this issue by making the voice of professionals, men and women, better taken into account at the level of our State policies. The existence of the guidelines can help us to do so.

But to allow us to play this role, we must be recognized as direct interlocutors for decision-makers. Mechanisms must be put in place so that there is a real participation of all professionals.

Civil society is also an essential interlocutor. But a difference should always be made, in decision making processes, between those who live from fishing (fishermen, women fish processors, etc) and those who do not (NGOs, etc.). In this respect, greater attention should be given to African consumers, because they also need fish to live.

The media, like REJOPRAO (network of journalists for responsible fisheries in West Africa), also have an important role to play so that there is a real public debate on the implementation of the guidelines, on the choice of development models for our fisheries, and the place that should be given to sustainable small scale fisheries.

-----