



IYAFA 2022 series - #1

The EU and African artisanal fisheries

How will the EU contribute to support sustainable artisanal fisheries in Africa through its International Partnerships

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The new EU regional programming for Africa gives fisheries and oceans greater importance. It also focuses more on small-scale fisheries stakeholders and civil society organisations, which is an opportunity for them to make their voice heard. This article covers a summary of the 2014-2020 and the ongoing 2021-2027 programming, calls for more policy coherence and recommends increased participation of stakeholders for greater and efficient use of the EU funding.

Introduction

2022 is the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture (IYAFA). Fishing communities face many challenges, including the effects of global warming, or the competition from other “blue” sectors, most of which are being promoted for a fast economic recovery to the pandemic.

To address all these issues, and guarantee the sustainable development of African artisanal fisheries, the African Confederation of Artisanal Fisheries Organisations (CAOPA) has called for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), in particular 14b, which requires to “ensure access to fisheries resources and markets for small-scale fisheries” and has identified three priority areas of action for African

artisanal fisheries: (1) securing access to resources, (2) promoting the place of women and (3) protecting them from competing sectors.

We are starting a series on what actions should the EU take, in its partnership with Africa and as a champion of international ocean governance (IOG) and sustainable fisheries, to support African artisanal fisheries? The series will look at the actions of the EU in the context of the Europe-Africa partnership, of the external dimension of the Common Fisheries Policy and finally, on blue economy investments.

1. The Europe-Africa partnership

The cooperation policy of the European Union is dealt with by the Directorate General for International Partnerships. The EU has a long tradition of cooperation in the fisheries sector which received a new impetus in 2014, with an increased total budget dedicated to this sector in the programming for the 2014-2020 period, based on the 11th FED and other financial instruments.

Whereas the 2021-2027 programming is still undergoing, seemingly following the path of the Commission global budget restrictions, it is already known that the focus of this programming will benefit more small-scale fisheries and civil society organizations. As it is not the amounts of funds spent that make a project successful, but rather its relevance and inclusiveness both at the elaboration and implementation phase, this news is welcome.

Schematically, the programs are divided between support for the State budget (budget support) and support to projects (via NGOs, professional organizations, etc.). The combination of these two approaches is important for fisheries and aquaculture governance, since it reinforces institutional and legal capacities at the State level, while also supports directly the stakeholders.

The importance given to CSOs and stakeholders from the small-scale fisheries sector in the upcoming programming makes it a unique opportunity for the sector to get out of “invisibility”¹ and make its voice heard and its needs recognized.

2. Summarizing the 2014-2020 programming: a progressive consideration of small-scale fisheries

From 2014 to 2020, an estimated 720 million euros were committed to promoting better **ocean governance** in partner countries.

Fisheries and aquaculture represented a great part of this portfolio, divided across more than 40 projects around the world and consisting of regional, continental and cross-continental and bilateral projects. Africa was the main recipient of these EU funds and projects were focused on three main fields of intervention: aquaculture, marine capture fisheries and inland capture fisheries.

¹ As mentioned in the Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food. UNGA, “Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food”, A/67/268, 8 August 2012. Available at: http://www.srfood.org/images/stories/pdf/officialreports/20121030_fish_en.pdf

Support to small-scale fisheries was provided at different levels, either directly or indirectly, the majority of projects had repercussions on the artisanal fishing sector - the main fisheries sector for most partner countries. These projects intervened notably in value chains, for example FISH4ACP,² which is now being implemented by FAO, where the majority of the 12 selected value chains are from the artisanal sector.

Some projects target specifically the small-scale sector, for example through regional programs like ECOFISH³ in the Indian ocean, which provides specific support to selected small-scale fisheries stakeholders, with nine field projects fully operational. The PESCAO⁴ program providing support to the Fishery Committee for the Eastern Central Atlantic (CECAF), has a small-scale fisheries working group that works towards the sustainable exploitation of small pelagics in West Africa. Also under PESCAO, DEMERSTEM⁵ is documenting the activities of artisanal fisheries vessels with monitoring devices to improve data collection. Furthermore, there are bilateral programs supporting a specific aspect of artisanal fisheries, for example employment in Mauritania with PROMOPECHE, food security in Liberia, food processing in Mali.

Many smaller projects implemented by CSOs, in cooperation with local communities, have also been selected, such as the FAR BAN BO programme in Ghana, the programme supporting the National Federation of Artisanal Fishing (FNPA) in Mauritania, and one on co-management in Sao Tome and Principe.

Gender inclusion is tackled through a cross cutting approach in the majority of EU projects. Under the PEUMP in the Pacific, the EU invests in data collection on the contribution of women to the fishery sector. The EU collects data under other projects such as FAR BAN BO in Ghana, AMPIANA in Madagascar, PROMOPECHE in Mauritania and CAPFish in Cambodia.

DG INTPA is to publish an update on the State of Play⁶ of its fisheries and aquaculture programme in the upcoming weeks, and will organise an informative session (InfoPoint) most likely in May.

3. The upcoming programming of 2021-2027: a clear focus on CSOs and small-scale fisheries stakeholders

Programming for projects covering the period 2021-2027 is being finalized. The multi-annual indicative programme (MIP) for Sub-Saharan Africa 2021-2027 sets the basis for regional cooperation between the EU and Africa. It is supplemented by national MIPs. This new regional programming gives to oceans and fisheries a greater importance, with a specific focus on the implication of civil society organisations, and women, adopting an inclusive approach.

² More information at: <https://www.fao.org/in-action/fish-4-acp/what-we-do/about/en/>

³ More information at: <https://www.ecofish-programme.org/>

⁴ More information at: <https://www.fao.org/cecaf/projects/pescao-project/fr/>

⁵ More information at: <http://pescao-demerstem.org/>

⁶ The most recent SoP is the following: EU, "Fisheries & Aquaculture – European development cooperation in the field of fisheries and aquaculture. State of play 2018", Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018. Available online at: https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/fisheries-aquaculture_en.pdf

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The MIP identifies 6 priorities, including one on Green Transition with a sub-priority dedicated to **Water and Oceans, and a specific objective on improving the sustainable use and management of oceans, coastal zones, river basins and lakes.**

What can be welcomed, is that the EU puts the emphasis on supporting CSOs as a key priority applied cross-sectionally, with a “**people-centred approach**” that focuses on improving local communities' self-reliance, social justice and participatory decision-making.

Quoting the MIP, the EU is committed to “*support inclusive, participatory, empowered, and independent civil society [...] and an inclusive and open dialogue with and between civil society.*” The EU wants to **be working “with key regional networks and associations”** in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors and private sector operators in agriculture, fisheries and food value chains.

Moreover, the EU recognizes the importance of **aquatic-food systems for food security and the importance of small-scale fisheries in achieving food security**, and will clearly look at small-scale fisheries, by putting “*forward a structured partnership with [...] networks of small-scale fisheries sector to strengthen their capacity in service delivery and in advocacy.*”

Besides, promoting **gender equality, inclusivity and a human rights-based approach** as well as investing in women and youth is also at the core of EU's programming. It plans the “*systematic integration of increased education for women, girls and youth, focus on women economic empowerment and tenure rights in projects and programmes.*”

The MIP calls for equal access, sustainable trade and economic opportunities to all, including, women, youth and people with disabilities, with a focus on **women entrepreneurs' associations**. In addition, support at regional level to improve business services **for entrepreneurs and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)** will be done with a forward-looking perspective, in particular by contributing to the formalization of the economy and of workers with a **special focus on women and youth** (result 3.2). Access to finance for women should be therefore facilitated (result 3.3). The programming also insists on taking into account the entirety of the value chains, with a global approach to aquatic food systems, notably to avoid food losses, and improving the respect of sanitary and phytosanitary measures, specifically strengthening border controls on agri-food and fish products.

A specific attention is given to **shared resources**, and a call for common approaches and regional management of transboundary fish species, such as small pelagics in West Africa. The MIP insists on reinforcing regional cooperation and coordination on policies, such as monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS), research and data sharing, sustainable management and also coherence with other policies (SFPAs, RFMOs...).

A sustainable blue economy is now of greater importance in the EU partnerships, compared to previous INTPA programs. On this topic, the MIP insists on the inclusive use of the ocean and water resources and, although it does not put the emphasis on fisheries per se, the programming for a sustainable blue economy comprises projects on ocean governance that include sustainable fisheries and combating IUU fishing.

The MIP also insists on the importance of an **integrated management of coastal zones** and of circular economy. This could serve as a basis for professional and civil society organisations to stress the need for protecting artisanal fisheries from other competing sectors of the blue economy. It could also resonate with their call for co-management in coastal areas, including for developing and managing MPAs.

4. Policy coherence for development to benefit small-scale fisheries

Policy Coherence for Development (PCD) is an obligation embedded in the Treaty (art. 208 TFEU). The EU should ensure that the impacts of its various policies towards African fisheries lead to sustainable development of these fisheries. Ensuring coherence is also key for guaranteeing the effectiveness of the EU fundings towards ocean governance and sustainable fisheries.

For example, the EU's sectoral support – embedded in **Sustainable Fisheries Partnerships Agreements (SFPAs)** with third countries – relies on a specific tool that is not aligned to cooperation mechanisms. Sectoral support is a portion of the financial contribution fully funded by the EU, and should be used to support local fishing sectors and fishing governance in the partner country, including the small-scale sector, and taking into account the needs of local communities.

Whereas development projects are not always consistent with each other, something that hinders their effectiveness, there are examples of good synergies, particularly in the Indian Ocean.

To achieve better coherence between the EU actions in partner countries benefiting fisheries, budgetary tools should be reconciled to strengthen budgetary efficiency⁷ and cohesion of policies. This would contribute to optimize the outcomes of these projects and ensure that they provide concrete results for the intended beneficiaries.

5. Involvement of CSOs: towards a greater efficiency of EU funds

The impacts of cooperation projects, and not only those of the EU, are not very visible. More often than not, the projects themselves are not known to the stakeholders, who only rarely see any benefit from projects coming their way.

The problem is not only at the level of project monitoring but already at the level of definition. Project definition is mainly carried out by national administrations which usually have poor knowledge of the country's artisanal fishing sector. Therefore, they rarely take the sector into account, either in national policies or in projects for which they are requesting fundings to donors.

⁷ PANOSSIAN, Anaïd, "Towards greater coherence and budgetary efficiency in future EU sustainable fisheries partnerships", CFFA-CAPE website, 31 August 2020. Available at: <https://www.cffacape.org/publications-blog/towards-greater-coherence-and-budgetary-efficiency-in-future-eu-sustainable-fisheries-partnerships>

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Moreover, whereas the EU has made progress on the inclusion of CSOs in its international partnerships policy, this is far from being the case at the level of African administrations and African regional organisations. Partner countries have a duty to foster participation of CSOs in decision-making processes, to consult systematically professional organizations and to design projects along with them. This also shows the relevance of a strong local civil society which can advocate at national, regional and pan-African levels to ensure the needs of African artisanal fisheries are heard and addressed.

An opportunity for fostering dialogue between African and European decision makers and civil society stakeholders will be the EU-Africa Task force⁸ for policy cooperation and dialogue on International Ocean Governance, that was recently announced by the European Commission. Following a feasibility study published last month – and for which artisanal fisheries stakeholders were consulted. This “blue” taskforce will reckon CSOs to be full members.

The participation of small-scale fisheries stakeholders must be a priority for the definition, implementation and evaluation of the results of the supported projects within the framework of the future EU-AU partnership.

CSOs, professional organizations and small-scale communities should make the most of the momentum to ensure they are known, noticed and their opinions taken into account. Now is the right timing to get involved in EU-Africa partnerships, and in the definition and the implementation of up-coming programmes.

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⁸ Le Den, X., et al., "Feasibility study on establishing an EU-Africa task force for policy cooperation and dialogue on international ocean governance", European Commission, European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency, 2022. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/13da3881-7cc6-11ec-8c40-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>