

# The Programme for Integrated Development of Artisanal Fisheries in West Africa

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## Role and Importance of Artisanal Fisheries

**M**arine artisanal fisheries plays an important role in the socioeconomic life of many countries along the West African coast, from Mauritania to Angola. Domestic landings constitute 56% of total catches; the rest is taken by foreign industrial vessels operating with fishing licenses. The landings of the artisanal sector (taken by fishers operating from canoes of different sizes) represent about 930,000 tonnes a year, that is, for the region, an average of 75% of the overall national fleet landings or 40% of the regional harvest.

Marine artisanal fisheries are estimated to give employment to more than 500,000 full-time and 400,000 part-time fishers. There are also about 1,800,000 positions in the secondary sector of fish processing and distribution, activities mainly carried out by women. To this must be added fishing material and fuel distribution, as well as the marine carpenters who depend largely on the sector's good economic health.

In addition, fisheries provide a valuable supply of animal protein to the increasing population, representing on average over 40% of animal protein supplies. Despite this large aggregated contribution to total catches and to food supply, the living conditions of fishers are not easy. Fishing communities are often in isolated locations, and the fishers

occupy a relatively low social status in most countries. The seasonal as well as long-term migration of fishers is also an important feature of West African artisanal fisheries.

The incomes of fishers' families are generated by fishing and related activities, such as boat and gear manufacture and repair, fish handling, processing, distribution and marketing. While fishing itself, with a few exceptions, is a male activity, women play an important role in handling, processing, distribution and marketing of fish as well as in the financing of fishing activities. The involvement of women, however, varies greatly between parts of the region due to differences in cultural norms and beliefs. Children of both sexes also make an important contribution to family incomes. They become engaged in fisheries and household activities at an early age, often at the expense of primary school enrolment. The total family incomes, how-

ever, remain low compared to national average.

## Critical Problems of the Artisanal Fisheries Sector

All countries in the region give high priority to small-scale fisheries development but the sector is plagued with problems ranging from lack of social services to low and inconsistent family incomes. The fishers' living conditions are often poor and the means of production are still mainly traditional in nature. The operations of the more modernized craft are adversely affected by the high cost of fuel. Hence, the development needs are not solely related to fish production and could best be approached within the context of integrated rural development, as recommended by the World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development held in Rome in 1984. This means that there is an explicit need for

the development of technologies and methodologies for application in national development schemes. The need is related to both technical and socioeconomic issues. There is also a need to facilitate the transfer of successful experiences and technologies among the countries of the region.

## IDAF and Its Activities

The strategy adopted at the World Fisheries Conference in 1984 was expected to be implemented in the form of activities or



*Constructing a dug-out canoe: an art that requires proper initiation and continuous improvement in design and construction skills.*

projects carried out through regional or subregional small-scale fisheries development groups. These groups were expected to consist of small teams of internationally or regionally recruited experts based in the region who would provide assistance and advisory services to national development teams working on integrated small-scale fisheries development.

The Programme for Integrated Development of Artisanal Fisheries in West Africa (IDAF) was initiated in 1983 to help some 20 coastal states from Mauritania to Angola which wished to develop and manage their artisanal fisheries through participatory and integrated approaches as defined in the strategy adopted in 1984 at the World Fisheries Conference.

Initially, IDAF was financed by Denmark and Norway. The second phase of the Programme which started in January 1989 and its third phase which started 1 July 1994, are entirely financed by the Kingdom of Denmark through the Danish International Development Assistance (DANIDA).

The headquarters of IDAF is at Cotonou, Benin. There are eight international and 10 regional/national staff in the Programme.

IDAF's primary long-term development objective is to ensure twenty coastal and insular West African countries a sustainable development and management of their artisanal fisheries for maximum social and economic benefit of their fishing communities in terms of employment, protein and earnings. This is done through an integrated and participatory approach in which emphasis is laid on equity, gender issues, the transfer of technology for development, environment protection, as well as the strengthening of human and institutional capacities.

### How IDAF Operates

In pursuance of the above objectives, IDAF works with and through existing fisheries projects, research institutions, the Departments of Fisheries and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the differ-

ent countries in addressing the particular needs of artisanal fisheries. The Programme pays particular attention to activities at the grassroots, by promoting the skills, capacities and potentials of fishing communities through their active involvement and participation in the planning and implementation of management and development activities, and by improving the technologies and skills involved in harvesting, handling, processing, and distribution, through in-the-field technical demonstrations and orientations. Similarly, attention is given to economic and social considerations including education (numeracy), health and infrastructure.

To ensure that the needs of IDAF's partners and beneficiaries are met, IDAF's activities are scrutinized by Liaison Officers who meet once a year to review and evaluate the progress and results of the Programme, to examine and approve workplans and also provide guidelines and orientation. Liaison Officers also serve as contact persons of IDAF in their respective countries. A Liaison Officer is a cadre of the artisanal fisheries sector,



*Proper market facilities would enhance the intervention of female fish traders in the commercialization of fishery products.*

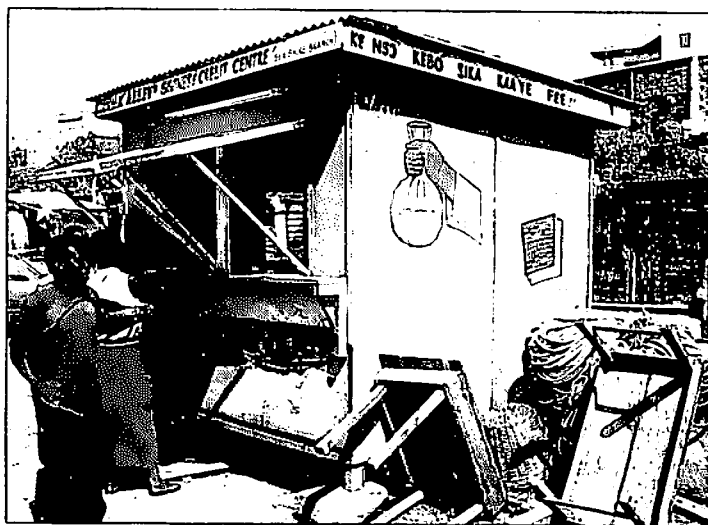
designated by his/her government and who, by his/her wise and prudent actions, endeavors to advance the interests and well being of the partners and beneficiaries that IDAF serves.

### IDAF's Beneficiaries and Accomplishments

The targeted direct beneficiaries are the staff of the Department of Fisheries in the 20 countries, and associated projects and research institutions; while the ultimate beneficiaries are all persons involved in the artisanal fisheries subsector in the region, that is, artisanal fishers themselves and their communities.

Over the past 10 years, IDAF has assisted government departments and development agencies in the identification, planning and implementation of field projects, where emphasis is given to the active participation of local fishers. Such advice and reviews are summarized in IDAF Working and Technical Reports, Newsletters etc.

The Programme has contributed to strengthening the technical capacity of the fisheries departments, improving regional technical competence, encouraging the use of tested approaches and methodologies, and the continuous gathering and dissemination of information.



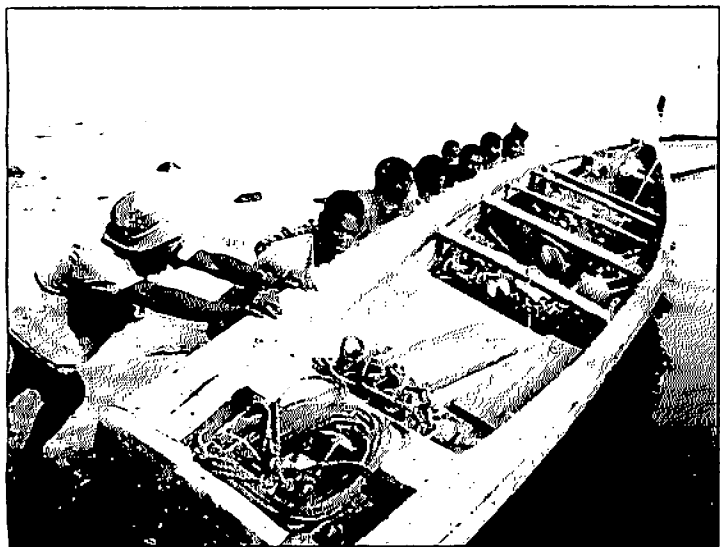
*The financing of fishing inputs and operations is a perennial problem to fishers.*



*The prices of fishing inputs, constantly on the increase, compromise the revenue of small-scale fishers.*

The Programme has analyzed the extent to which the participatory and integrated strategy which it promotes has been adopted with a view to drawing attention to the most salient lessons learned, so that its intervention and those of other actors in the sector can better contribute to the improvement of socioeconomic conditions of fishers.

The strategy has been well received in the region as evidenced by the number of user groups that have adhered to it; the achievements and changing landscape of communities where the strategy has been tried. Fishers have a more confident perspective of their situation and the limits of external assistance; governments are adopting more realistic atti-



*Putting out the boat to sea is the first task of a fishing team.*

tudes to development more in tune with the needs of fishers; while approaches for integrated development of small-scale fisheries are better understood.

So far and in general terms, the Programme has worked in the context of an abundant or seemingly adequate fishery resource with moderate population pressure. The scenario is, how-

ever, changing and we will soon face the triple constraints of reduced or depleting fish stocks, degrading environment and increasing low-income population pressure. Like in other sectors, it must be anticipated that just to survive, parts of the population surplus in the fishing communities will enter the artisanal fisheries, which will increase the competition for the resources among the small-scale fishers, in addition to the prevailing competition between the artisanal and industrial fisheries, with their attendant effects on the environment.

In this context, the present Phase III of the Programme which started on 1 July 1994 is laying emphasis on identifying and disseminating elements

and mechanisms that favor the sustainability of initiatives in fishing communities; the improvement of competence of national fisheries department staff in development and management planning of artisanal fisheries; the promotion of responsible fishing; the devolution of major resource management and development decisions to the local community; and the

identification, development and implementation of strategies related to information and experience exchange in artisanal fisheries within the region.

In the endeavor to attain the above objectives, IDAF is tackling the following aspects in its work:

- assisting and training in the elaboration and implementation of a clear and coherent national development policy for the artisanal fishery sector;
- providing advice on management and allocation of resources between artisanal and industrial fishing fleets, both national and foreign;
- involving users in the design and management of onshore infrastructure; monitoring the sector's evolution by setting up an economic indicator system, adapted to the financial and human availabilities;
- improving fishing technologies in accordance with their economic profitability and the available resources; increasing the final product's value by improvement in processing and marketing;
- promoting community development in accordance with the lessons learned from Phases I and II and oriented towards the sustainability and replicability of actions undertaken; reinforcing the Programme's information/communication system and also laying greater emphasis on the use of experts from the region through its strategy of IDAF Fellows.

It is anticipated that by the end of the third Phase of the Programme, the region will have a nucleus of field-oriented experts capable of responding to the challenges of the artisanal fisheries sector and who will spur development in their individual countries in keeping with their own aspirations and needs. 6

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