



Summary of the strategic compass on Fishery Policies in West Africa

REPAO

DRAFT



Network on Fishery Policies in West Africa - REPAO -

Sicap Liberté IV Villa n 5000 P. O. Box: 7329

Soumbédioune Dakar (Senegal)

Telephone: (221) 825 27 87 /Fax: (221) 825 27 99

Site web: www.enda.diapol.org –

E-mail: repao@orange.sn / repao@endadiapol.org

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Preamble

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)¹ expands over 6.13 million square kilometers with a population of 230 million inhabitants. The community, which has a significant hydraulic network (two continental rivers, a variety of small coastal rivers, natural and artificial lakes) and a littoral of 6135 km (sometimes preceded by lagoon corresponding to an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)² of 2,016,900 square kilometers), definitely represents a positive halieutical potential, developed by an economically and socially important fishing sector:

- Economically, the sector is significantly contributing to the GDP of most countries and represents an important source of revenue for coastal countries through exports³ and the taxes and/or financial proceeds generated by various fishing agreements signed with other countries or economic zones (mainly the European Union).
- Socially, the sector is playing a central role in providing for the needs in animal proteins of the majority of people with low purchasing power, and also creates a number of jobs and remarkable self-employments to alleviate unemployment.

Fishing, that used to be practiced in the first half of the 20th century by native people who were specialized in supplying local markets, had later on remarkably expanded due to the concomitant development of markets and transports. As of the beginning of the 20th century, fishery experienced a drop in capture, which can be explained by the overexploitation as a result of an ever growing demand (high population growth, rapid urbanization and migration of people toward littoral areas, market globalization), climate changes and hydro-agricultural developments affecting the ecosystems, the increase in fuel prices that limited fishing efforts and a poor administration of the sector. It is in this context that the “*Network on fishery policies in West Africa* » (REPAO) was put in place, which is intended to network various fishing operators in the sub-region in order to build a common vision for the future and identify sectorial policy lines linking research and competitiveness on global markets, the satisfaction of national people’s needs in food and the sustainable preservation of halieutical resources. Knowing the (ecological and political) vastness and diversity of the field to be covered, REPAO has focused its intervention on one of the three West African sub-areas, i.e. the seven SRFC countries. A first set of studies carried out on the maritime fishing in 6 of the 7 SRFC countries allowed it to concretely lay out its intervention methodology presented as follows.

1. Brief presentation of the overall context

1.1. Marine environment and exploitation potential

¹ This organization, instituted in 1975 under the Lagos treaty, is aimed at promoting the economic, social and cultural development of the 16 founding countries, including: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ivory Coast, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

² **EEZ**: Exclusive Economic Zone. The United Nations 1982 Montego Bay Convention on Sea Rights establishes an EEZ of 200 nautical miles (371 km) within which a coastal State is sovereign in terms of exploitation of natural resources, particularly fishing, but also oil.

³ For Senegal and Mauritania, the exports of halieutical produce ranks first in the countries’ overall exports. It respectively generates 30% and 45% of these countries’ total exports incomes.

Two sub-areas can be identified in the West African sub-region: the Southern sub-area corresponding to the coasts of 5 countries of the Guinean Gulf⁴ (Cote-d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Benin, and Nigeria) and the Western sub-region that is wealthier than the former. The intervention area of REPAO integrates the "Central-Eastern Atlantic" which expands from the Strait of Gibraltar to the mouth of the Congo⁵ River. Its 6135-long littoral (sometimes preceded by lagoons) corresponds to the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)⁶ of 2,016,900 square kilometers representing a definitely positive, but heterogeneous halieutical potential.

The Western sub-area, which we are particularly interested in, corresponds to the littoral of seven countries (Cape Verde, Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Sierra Leone and Liberia) that can be divided into four segments.

- **Mauritania – Senegal – The Gambia – Guinea-Bissau:** During the dry season (November – June), the cold wind from the Canaries, together with the maritime trade wind, causes a rise of cold and deep tides, rich in mineral elements (upwelling). Starting from June, the equatorial counter-current (also known as the "*Guinean wind*") together with the monsoon causes an accumulation of warm water (piling-up) along the coasts, particularly south of Cape Verde. The alternation of these seasonal currents is one of the essential bases for the wealth of the diversified marine fauna, adding to the important terrigenous contributions of the Senegal and Gambia Rivers. This coast is considered as one of the richest in the world.
- **Guinea - Northern Sierra Leone:** down to the South, the Guinean Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) is located at the interface of the Senegalese-Mauritanian and Guinean Gulf hydrodynamic systems. It is characterized by its plateau which is the largest in West Africa (up to two hundred kilometers along the coast) preceded by a dense mangrove swamp littoral, subject to a transitional wet tropical climate with two very marked seasons (one hot and dry, and another hot and wet). The north of the EEZ during the dry season benefits from the lowering of the tides in the Canaries, rich in nutritional elements, fertilizing the superficial waters and favoring the development of the phytoplankton. During the rainy seasons⁷, from June to October, the enrichment source is no longer oceanic, but continental. Coastal rivers, poor in mineral and organic elements, have a powerful mechanic leaching effect on the mangrove swamp. By suspending the nutritional elements trapped in the coastal vases, they enable high primary production compared to the other systems without upwelling. In addition, they open a second way to enrichment with a massive supply of litter in the coastal area that can feed some organisms. The Northern littoral of Sierra Leone, including the end of the Guinean plateau, beyond which the plateau is considerably reduced and the waters are subject to the hydrodynamic system of the Guinean Gulf, which is potentially poorer.

⁴ **Guinean gulf** : The Gulf of the Southern Atlantic Ocean bordering West and Central Africa, from the Palm cape at the Ivorian - Liberian border until the mouth of the Ogooue in Gabon. Currently, with the development of the offshore oil deposits of the Angolan basin, this initial limit is often considered to be more extended toward the South, at the mouth of the *Cunene* serving as a frontier between Angola and Namibia. The riparian countries based on the first interpretation are: Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe and Gabon, and based on the second interpretation, these countries add to Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola.

⁵FAO lay-out.

⁶ **EEZ:** Exclusive Economic Zone. The United Nations 1982 Montego Bay Convention on Sea Rights establishes an EEZ of 200 nautical miles (371 km) within which a coastal State is sovereign in terms of exploitation of natural resources, particularly fishing, but also oil.

⁷ The 4,000 mm rainfall in Conakry ranks among the highest along the West African Coast.

- **The Cape Verde archipelago**, made up of 10 Islands and 18 small islands, is characterized by its widest EEZ in the sub-region (734,265 square kilometers). Those volcanic-originated islands are characterized by their narrow continental plateau and deep valleys. As it does not have a particularly favorable hydrodynamic system as the previous ones, its overall potential is limited (35,000 tons), but diversified.
- **Southern Sierra Leone and Liberia** (coast of grains) corresponds to an interface between that sub-area and that of the Guinean Gulf corresponding to areas of permanently warm waters, poor in terms of halieutical potential.

1.2. A more and more numerous and urbanized population

The coastal areas (less than 100 km from the littoral and less than 100 km above sea level) harbors 1.2 billion inhabitants, representing one fifth of the world population. The average population density is three times higher than the world average in coastal areas, and for several decades the population growth in those areas is more rapid than inland.

After remaining for long one of the least urbanized regions of the world, West Africa is nowadays experiencing a record urbanization growth (higher than 5%). These urbanization processes are concentrated for the majority on the coastal area (50% of the West African population by 2010). This concentration that is causing deforestation, coastal erosion, influx of pollutants and overexploitation of marine resources, has an important impact on the coastal ecosystems, including fishing.

Draught, poverty and the lack of lands have brought about large **migratory movements** not only toward towns, but also toward the littoral⁸ where migrants have been able to carry out fishing activities that revealed to be easily accessible. Thus, littoral erosion has been intensified, notably regarding the removal of sand for building port installations, dredging, the destruction of mangrove swamps and the change in water levels due to the construction of dams for irrigation and the creation of hydroelectric power generators. Nearly all the major cities, agricultural farms, port installations, airports and industries, as well as other parts of socioeconomic equipments are located along or near the coasts.

All these observations correspond to the realities that can be easily checked nowadays in all coastal towns. We should bear in mind that the gravity of these facts may be increasing due to the population growth forecasts in coastal countries in the sub-region: 246 million nowadays, 434 million in 2050, almost the double (x1.8) within 40 years (see chart N°1) and the strong propensity of national citizens and citizens from neighboring land-locked countries to migrate toward coastal areas.

Chart N°1: West Africa's riparian population trends (x1000)

Year Country	1970	2010	2050
Cape Verde	267	567	812
Mauritania	1262	3520	7497
Senegal	4158	11859	21589

⁸ As an example, 70% of Senegalese are now living near the sea.

The Gambia	469	1680	2905
Guinea-Bissau	3897	9990	19591
Guinea Conakry	584	1827	4719
Sierra Leone	2657	5859	10339
Liberia	1387	4130	9821
Ivory Coast	5 310	19 777	27 572
Ghana	8 983	24 312	39 548
Togo	2 138	6 977	10 005
Benin	2 828	9 793	21 589
Nigeria	51 857	145 991	258 478
Total	85797	246282	434465

1.3. Underestimated ecologically risky land developments

In order to meet the needs of the farming sector (production of food and/export commodities) and energy needs of the expanding industry and population, various states have opted for the development of their hydraulic resources by the creation of lakes for the water supplies of developed areas and/or produce electric energy, or to prevent the rise of salty waters into rivers.

The creation of important stagnant waters, as well as the regulation and durability of outputs generated deep changes in the hydrographical ecosystems in terms of flora and fauna. While the reservoirs could allow for an increase in halieutical resources, they generally caused its impoverishment in terms of diversity, mainly by the introduction of dominant species considered to be more productive. Downstream, they cause deep changes relating to seasonal output changes, nitrification and reduction in terrigenous inputs from upstream waters. In sea waters, these changes can bring about significant mutations entailing the dwindling of nutritional inputs of the waters running into the sea.

In order to be equipped with some infrastructures that meet import and export requirements, the countries in the sub-region have equipped themselves with port structures and installations that are causing serious disruptions of the littoral ecosystems (influence on coastal currents, destruction of the marine habitat, flow of pollutants). Generally led by the only concern for economic efficiency, these developments were decided and realized without any concern about their environmental impacts on the littoral and lagoon universe.

1.4 A more and more accelerated globalization

Furthermore, since 1989, the fall of the Berlin wall has tremendously speeded-up a globalization fostered over several centuries. Globalization, as a powerful move toward openness and interdependence, appears both as a tremendous hope and a terrible threat for mankind. In terms of maritime transport, it was concretely expressed through a strong

increase in the traffic flow and thus, in the risks of pollution. As regards fisheries, it enabled traditional small-scale fisheries to get the best price and have access to richer markets, and further brought about the advent of foreign vessels limiting the fishing efforts in their countries in a bid to preserve their marine environment (case of the European Union) or looking for new sources of supply to meet the needs of their rapidly growing markets (Asian countries).

1.5. A global raw material center

Two third of the world fossil energies are carried by vessels, and sea transport keeps on increasing. With its 24 billion **oil** barrels, the Guinean Gulf is turning into a world offshore production center. Out of the 9 million barrels produced daily across the continent, 5 million are produced by the Guinean Gulf. These figures are expected to increase in the coming years with the exploitation of new deposits. Besides, ongoing prospection proves the existence of some potentials in the countries of the sub-region (Mauritania and land locked Sahelian countries). For sure, the development and geographical expansion of these oil tapping activities will carry along some major environmental dangers for the marine, littoral and fresh water environment at all the levels of exploitation (from prospection to transport). Furthermore, as offshore oil and gas stocks keep on dwindling, the release of pollutants by production plants keeps on increasing, which is endangering fish supplies.

In addition, various countries of the sub-region and the Guinean Gulf have some **important forest and mining resources** (precious timber, iron, manganese, cobalt, chromium, copper, etc.) and are providers of **commodities** (peanut, cotton, cocoa, coffee, palm oil, peanut oil, etc.). All these productions are causing a strong intensification of the maritime traffic and related ecological risks, in addition to the risks linked to the release of pollutants in the sea.

1.6. The dangers of toxic waste and polluting activities

According to the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), 300 million tons of toxic waste is produced every year by industrialized countries. This astronomic figure reveals the challenges relating to their disposal. Since May 5th 1992, at which date it was enforced, the Bale convention regulates the transfer of dangerous waste between developed and underdeveloped⁹ countries. In 1995, the convention had ruled as illegal the export of toxic waste from developed countries to underdeveloped countries, as the latter do not have the means to dispose of the waste according to the standards.

Though it allowed for reducing the phenomenon, the ban has not completely eliminated it, as the traffic of waste is still subject to a profitable trade. The transfer of refuse particularly relates to dangerous industrial waste and various expired or expiring goods divided in three types: chemical products, electronic products, and radioactive refuse.

Western companies may think it more profitable for them to illegally or legally transfer their toxic waste and polluting activities in an attempt to shun enduring their (economic and social) management costs in the West. Africa, particularly West Africa, is threatened by these transfers as recently proved by the case of the toxic refuse disposed of in Abidjan, Cote-

⁹ "Cross-border movements of dangerous waste must be reduced to the minimum, in line with their proper environmental management. They must be processed and disposed of as near as possible to their production place. Eventually, their production must be reduced and minimized from the source. "

d'Ivoire. The tremendous extent of desert can be secret places for these stockings, but the costs entailed by the transport of these heavy refuses rather give priority to the closeness of debarkation places (ports). Besides, the concentration of population on the littoral generates significant needs for job creation and of course, gives priority to the relocation of polluting activities.

These dangers are not only experienced in the littoral and maritime areas. Waste is also disposed of inland, where the degradation of packaging brings about the pollution of ground water on a more or less shorter run.

Moreover, the technology transfer in connection with the processing of toxic waste or the relocation of polluting activities represents another major danger for the environment. The equipment proposed in developing countries (incinerators, chlorine or grain plants, coal plants, nuclear plants, etc.) can have some considerable side effects on the environment. Most of these plants rather give priority to sites near water points so as to be able to use that water and to reject their effluents.

1.7. The development of mass tourism

The development of mass tourism in relation to globalization carries along the creation of reception resorts and activities relating to the exploitation of this income generating sector. In their quest for interesting sites, promoters are setting up, first of all, according to their immediate interests, without any major concern about coastal populations and the sustainable management of the environment. In this way, spawning grounds and other vital sites to the marine flora and fauna were destroyed. On the other hand, cruise vessels are releasing millions of liters of sewage, as well as tons of solid refuse. More and more surveys are establishing a link between the disposal of refuse by vessels in the sea and the proliferation of harmful seaweed, oxygen-impoverished "dead areas", the disappearing of banks of seafood, and the destruction of wildlife.

1.8. A jeopardized environment

Maritime and coastal areas are experiencing various attacks from anthropic origins linked to the migration toward seaside areas of an expanding population, to an accelerated urbanization, to the installation of equipment, to activities in connection with oil tapping, raw material transport, mass tourism development, disposal of toxic waste and the relocation of polluting activities.

For sure, these various attacks have and will still have more and more impact on the overexploited halieutical resources weakened by the degradation of their living environment.

Knowing the dangers incurred by the increasing anthropic¹⁰ pressure, West African coastal states have opted for the development of **protected marine areas**. Nowadays, there are fourteen biosphere parks and two reserves covering 2,700,000 hectares (land and sea included) to harbor 170,000 inhabitants.

1.9. Climate change-related hazards

¹⁰ Pressure exerted by people on resources. Overexploitation. Excessive fishing.

According to the report of delegates of the intergovernmental panel on climate change (IPCC) formed by about 124 countries, gathered in Brussels in April 2007, the consequences of global warming are dramatic for the ecosystems and people of the globe. By 2080, 30% of animal and vegetal species are irreversibly threatened to disappear; 3.2% of human beings will suffer acute water shortages and 600 million people will be exposed to starvation due to draught, the degradation and desalinization of soils which may reduce agricultural production by 20%.

100 million people living at less than one meter above sea level may lose their habitat and way of life because of the rise of sea level, which should reach 20 to 60 centimeters by 2100. Every year, two million more people might suffer floods, notably in the great deltas of West Africa, Asia or the Mississippi, causing the exodus of millions of refugees.

By measuring the impacts of ongoing climate changes, one could already foresee, with a striking probability, the tensions and conflicts generated by the movements of people as a result of problems of adjustment to ever-changing ecosystems.

Population concentration in coastal areas raises three major problems:

- (i) How to manage growing pressures exerted on the environment by changes in the use of land, pollution, aquaculture, etc.?
- (ii) How to organize the habitat in these areas so as to limit the number of people exposed to the rise of the sea level, major storms and other unforeseen effects of climate change?
- (iii) How to find a balance between the demand for exploitation permits on the littoral for various, sometimes antagonistic, economic activities such as sea transport, extraction activities, tourism, fishery and aquaculture?

Apart from the risk of rise in the water level, other consequences of current climate changes on the marine environment are not yet clearly identified, particularly in terms of halieutical resources. Are they going to slow down upwelling and cause a warming of the water, which is detrimental to halieutical resources? This hypothesis is not excluded and imposes anticipatory measures, particularly in terms of the adjustment capacity building of fishery operators, mainly fishers and wholesale fish merchants.

2. Analysis of ongoing causes and dynamics

Since the beginning of the 20th century, fishing has recorded a slowdown of captures due to the overexploitation of halieutical resources resulting from (inadequate, inconsistent or unsustainable) fishing management policies, to the existence of over-dimensioned fishing capacities compared to the state of resources. That extra-fishing capacity is linked to the rise in the demand for halieutical produce, which has doubled over the past 30 years (45 millions tons in 1973 to 100 million tons nowadays and 128 million tons forecast for 2020). That high rise in demand resulted at the same time from:

- The change of nutritional habits of Western countries geared toward an increased consumption of halieutical produce¹¹,

¹¹ As a reminder, health problems (obesity, cholesterol, etc.) and crises linked to the “mad cow” and then the “bird flu” have tremendously contributed to the development of the consumption of halieutical produce that is considered to be less dangerous.

- The global population growth that naturally entailed an increase in the number of consumers,
- Urbanization that facilitates the creation of effective sectors of fishery places in consumption areas, namely towns,
- The lesser cost of halieutical animal proteins compared to meat (particularly poultry, beef, sheep, goat meat and pork)
- The influx of migration from villages to towns and coastal areas considered to be more hospitable.

These various factors that are generating considerable markets have brought about:

- The operation of **industrial flotillas** allowing some Western and Asian countries that have reached the dangerous threshold for the sustainability of halieutical resources in their EEZ to fish legally (through fishing agreements with riparian countries) or illegally (pirate vessels) around the world. The sophistication of a number of these arsenals leaves little chance to the fish that are easily spotted (radar, sounding lines, sonar, air flight) and/or grouped (unmoored FAD with marker buoys) before being literally pumped in by dreadful engines (bottom trawl nets, pelagic trawls, deep-sea trawl, revolving seine) without distinction neither of shape (notably the young ones), nor of species (impoverishment of the food chain). As surface resources keep on dwindling, these arsenals are fishing more and more beyond 1,000 m in the quest of new species to be marketed. We can note that a number of them are subsidized by their origin countries and/or have access to tax-free fuel.
- The development of coastal fishing notably along the **small coast** by migrants as easily accessible income sources, first as seamen, and then for the more ambitious ones, as fishing employers before eventually becoming owners of more or less sophisticated canoes.
- The access to Western markets – much more profitable – allowed a number of traditional fishermen to start up as ship-managers, owners of big fridge-canoes, allowing them to fish **offshore** and further with more productive engines (revolving seines, long-lines, etc.).

The progressive running of these three types of fishing (deep-sea, offshore and shallow sea) with more and more efficient fishing engines have made it possible to tap the main sea areas and caused a global overexploitation.

These dynamics internal to the fishing sector combine with other external dynamics connected to equipment and land development (hydro-agricultural and/or hydroelectric equipments for inland waters, urbanization, port equipment, tourist resorts, road networks, processing of sewage, oil mining, uncontrolled pollution, etc.) to progressively disturb the ecosystems harboring halieutical resources.

These factors restricting the evolution of halieutical resources to more or less higher levels are less, if not at all, managed inconsistently. In general, compartmentalization is in force and the rule of “*every one for themselves*” is so much common place that each of them corresponds to specific financial interests.

Therefore, halieutical sectors in West Africa should face various types of issues:

- ↳ **Issues about access to halieutical resources**
- ↳ **Market Access Issues**

- ↗ **Issues about building viable and developable fishing units**
- ↗ **Issues about the coherence of public policies**
- ↗ **Issues about stakeholders' organization and participation**

2.1. Issues about access to halieutical resources

Significant efforts of shift in fishing are nowadays noted in the exploitation of halieutical resources in Western Africa from pelagic species (mainly used for local consumption) to demersal coastal species (mainly for exports). The strong position of the export of halieutical sectors in West Africa has guided traditional and industrial fishermen toward the exploitation of species meant for foreign markets. Similarly, the States of the sub-region are forced to sign fishing agreement (so-called trade agreements) with third countries in order to be granted some financial compensation of which the amount varies from one country to another. These fishing agreements allow third countries to relocate the excess of their fishing capacity and/or directly ensure the supplies of their markets. In a context marked by the increasing scarcity of resources and even by the threat of biological severing for some supplies as they are overexploited, one can note a rush of operators toward an ever aggravated exploitation of halieutical resources. The “maximum immediate profit” seems to be the only concern of operators without any heed to sustainability, hence, the tensions between players themselves (among small-scale fishermen, between small-scale fishermen and industrial fishers, between local and foreign fishers) in a bid to get access to resources, but also tensions both at the levels of food security and availability of resources.

2.2 Market Access Issues

The countries of the sub-region belong to the Africa - Caribbean - Pacific (ACP) group, which enjoys some tariff-based benefits to access the European market (based on the exemption of custom duties for the entrance of the products from most ACP countries to European markets). These countries are exporting up to 80% of their halieutical production to the European market thanks to commercial preferences, which are nowadays threatened by the new Cotonou convention which further introduced the principle of reciprocity in the market access conditions. The new convention abides by the WTO rules that want developing countries to be applied the same conditions for accessing the market. The competitiveness of halieutical produce on the European market has completely dropped due to the progressive erosion of the custom duties applied to non ACP countries and the EBA (Everything but Arms) initiative, which allows LDCs to benefit from the same custom duty exemptions. The access of African products to the European market is actually threatened by the 2008 prospect. Some essential economic roles played by fishery might be disrupted with the very probable fall in export assets and the loss of jobs if alternatives are not found. In order to avoid such a situation, it is necessary to go through a diversification of markets and exported products. Negotiations at the WTO about the issues on the subsidies to fishery is a major challenge if African countries are to be able to still preserve their market shares and not suffer unfair competition by subsidized exports from developed countries. The African trade of halieutical produce, far from being in a “fallback position” is one of the reliable alternatives which can allow coastal countries increase their export incomes, given the strong potentials of the market. The diversification of markets should lead these countries into surveying new markets and penetrate less timidly Asian and American markets.

2.3. Issues about building viable and developable fishing units

Despite an increasing production, exploitation costs are increasing for fishery units on the expense of economic profitability. Fishery units benefit more from the price-effect that is not passed on to the restoration of resources. Finally, the increase in exports also creates conditions of economic dependence vis-à-vis importing countries, without however any increase in value, reinforcement, structuring of the fish trade (all segments included) in order to be able particularly to have access to new markets or new types of consumers. The effects of public policies on the modernization of fishing, including the support for the distribution of inputs and equipments, subsidies for exports and maintaining tax exemption for fishing engines and fuels, have encouraged fishery units to increase their capacities and increase their fishing efforts with a view to supplying foreign markets.

The quest for rapid profits has also led the fishery units to develop some income generating strategies in some segments which have not contributed to their reinforcement or modernization. Growth through exports is then only achieved thanks to the price-effect, whereas at the same time the species-based production is reducing. On the other hand, the capitalization of the sector is anarchically increasing (redeployment, “environmental dumping” and increase in fishing efforts – increase in the number of productive fishing units). On the other hand, in some sectors, it appears to be insufficient (poor investment or wastage of investments – poor post-capture production capacities). Furthermore, some new production strategies have emerged, which encourage the use of fishing methods that are endangering resources and now affecting new species (octopuses, shrimps). They are finally contributing to the desertion of coastal pelagic fishing for demersal fishing, which disturbs the supplies of local markets, thus causing fears for an increased deficit of proteins in people’s food supplies.

In front of the rarefaction of resources, fishing units are facing much trouble and turning very rapidly into poverty-generating livelihood units doomed to disappear on a more or less longer run. Should we admit this evolution as an incontrovertible transition or should we prevent it by proposing other alternatives? Alternatives for fishing units relate to their restructuring into viable and developable production tools. By “*viable and developable production tools*” we mean: that are able to ensure decent and improving living standards to all the members of the exploitation unit and potential employees, while being in a position to generate an exploitation profit that could be totally or partly be invested as part of the capital of the exploitation unit.

2.4. Issues about the coherence of public policies

The high extroversion of the West African halieutical sector is unable to ensure the socioeconomic and environmental sustainability of fisheries and brings about chain-effects, unbalancing it altogether, i.e. both upstream and down the line.

Fishing in West Africa, which is determined by exports and fishing commercial agreements have now reached overproduction and overcapacity. That extroversion also encourages the overexploitation of some fishes or seafood, the depletion of some high added-value species (noble fish, shrimps, octopuses). Some dangers of biological depletion are nowadays observed, which entail a negative re-configuration of the halieutical habitat and environmental frameworks that are made fragile at various biological levels.

Finally, supplies in internal and sub-regional markets are steadily slowing down; the sustainability on a medium term of export trade is jeopardized; the processing segment (one

of the value increase sources for production) are lacking in raw material and consequently, are lacking the means for its development. The food security conditions of local people are also less and less satisfied (too much expensive or rare produce). The chain effects are the consequence of unadjusted strategies by fishery operators, largely encouraged by States and leading to negative money betting. The inadequacies noted in the region, the supervision and development of fisheries provided for by the fishery Code relating to small-scale fisheries encourages the overexploitation of resources, urging to only producing for export and the use of forbidden methods. The non existence of access restrictions for traditional small-scale fishers aggravates these extroversion factors at the same times as they bring about contradictions between fishing policies, trade policies and environmental policies.

The lack of clear definition of fishery policies at the level of States to express a clear vision, clear missions, goals and long-term actions reinforces the idea of sight piloting and daily management that West African halieutical sectors are subjected to. Therefore, it becomes difficult to consider any harmonization of fishery policies at the regional level, which however is a major need for the sustainable management of halieutical resources, notably regarding shared reserves. Besides, the parallel or consecutive effects of the Structural Adjustment Plans (SAP) overbidding on the balance of external accounts have contributed a little bit more to the connection of the sector with exports. The incidences of the SAPs are leading to some exogenous drives that are reinforcing speculation on the expense of the sustainable development of fisheries and the potential of commercial value increase. Other stimulations resulting from the enforcement of the articles of the Lome Convention have intensified the flow of the halieutical produce exports of the sub-region toward the European Union.

2.5. Issues relating to players' participation

There are various stakeholders intervening in the fishing sector who can be divided into different categories. However, we can distinguish seven major categories: professional fishing organizations, States, intergovernmental organizations, development partners, research institutions, NGOs and development associations.

Based on their missions, their internal constitution, their challenges, and constraints, they are sometimes in collaboration, in competition, in conflict, in dominant or weaker positions, etc. with each other.

Understanding and analyzing the challenges of these stakeholders is vital as a premise to building a large stakeholders' network. We have then attempted, based on each category of players, to dissect their environment according to three important dimensions: their main difficulties and constraints, their main assets and their challenges. This analysis made per category of players is necessary to lay out fields of action that a network, which intends to federate, follow-up and connect fishery stakeholders, can cover.

2.5.1 Professional fishing organizations

Within that category, we can distinguish three major categories:

- Professional organizations of traditional fishing :
 - o Professional Organizations of fishers
 - o Professional organizations of traditional processing
 - o Professional organizations of fish trade
- Professional organizations of industrial fishing
- Organizations of related professions

Their main difficulties and constraints:

- Monopoly and exploitation of organizations by some of their members, the State and some NGOs
- Poor internal democracy (accountability, transparency, etc.),
- Inadequacy of communication,
- Inadequacy of professional and strategic capacities

Their main assets

- Their expertise,
- Size in terms of number,
- Their potential lobbying power (once together)

Their Challenges

- Organizing professionally
- Keeping ties with other players (namely NGOs, States, financial partners) in order to profit from resources
- Making their voice heard and influencing the decisions of governments
- Integrating the economic surplus generated by local States and people

2.5.2 States and Decentralized authorities

This refers to governments generally represented by the ministry in charge of fishery, local governments, prefectures or sub-prefectures, fishing administrations (central or decentralized) and local authorities such as districts and rural communities. But also it is necessary to integrate trade and environment ministries as they interact between each other. Of course, the decisions made and the actions undertaken in one of the three sectors influences the two others, hence the importance of putting them in synergy for a better consistence.

Their main difficulties:

- Difficulties in achieving their assignments and regulatory function
- Corruption
- Difficulties in facing developed countries and/or international institutions that are imposing them their attitude

Their main assets:

- Their legitimacy
- Their prescriptive power
- Scope of intervention = dissemination of reforms
- Their means of intervention
- Their human resources (sometimes poorly used or inadequately used)

Their challenges:

- (Normally) implementing their mission and role
- Keeping their independence and autonomy – Seeing to a proper regulation

2.5.3. Intergovernmental and international organizations**↳ Intergovernmental organizations**

These refer to institutions created and given mandate by their member States. In this category, we have intergovernmental organizations such as the Sub-regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC), the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Their main difficulties:

- Limited sovereignty : distant links with players
- Representation. Administrative and organizational sluggishness = super structures
- Implementation and regulation. Compartmentalization and little room for maneuver in front of States.

Their main assets:

- Their sub-regional status
- A supranational order

Their Challenges:

- Achieving their ultimate mandate of laying out « regional policies » in collaboration with the various stakeholders
- Modalities for more participative decisions (taking into account the interests of various players)
- Large dissemination of information
- Ensuring a proper regulations

↳ **International institutions**

This refers to international organizations whose strategies and intervention can have an impact on the fishing sector. These include FAO, WTO, UNEP and other United Nations agencies and programs.

Their main difficulties:

- Their administrative and organizational sluggishness = super structures. Distant ties with other players.
- Inadequacy of heed to local realities

Their main assets:

- Their international status = better synergy.
- Their resources ...

Their challenges:

- Facing external pressures, mainly from leading countries
- Ensuring a proper regulations
- Ensuring a larger dissemination of information
- Ensuring more participative decision making modalities (taking into account the interests of the various players)

2.5.4 Development partners

In this category, there are the bilateral and multilateral financial partners of the countries of the sub-region. Among them are cooperation with France, Holland, Japan, or Sweden, or the World Bank, the EU, the ADB, etc...

Their main difficulties:

- The conditions attached to their aid
- Their administrative sluggishness

Their main assets:

- Their capacities to raise funds
- Their professionalism and expertise

Their challenges:

- Contributing to the development of so-called underdeveloped countries according to the guidelines enacted by their own countries
- Promoting their visions and values in compensation for their funding = institutionalization.

2.5.5 Research institutions

This category includes research institutions in the sub-region in the fishery sector such as CRODT/ISRA in Senegal, IMROP in Mauritania, CIPA in Guinea-Bissau, CNSHB in Guinea, and INDP in Cape Verde. In this category we also have the institutions of Northern countries that are carrying out research in the fisheries of West African countries such as universities or the OECD.

Their main difficulties:

- Considering grassroots' players as agents of their own development and not as research subjects
- Adequacy of their research with the needs expressed by concerned players
- Financial resource mobilization
- Consistence of their research: including other research areas than biological aspects
- Inadequacy of the dissemination of the outcomes of their research

Their main assets:

- Their expertise and knowledge
- Their legitimacy

Their challenges:

- Tending toward the consolidation of relationships between research and « field » reality
- Extending the results of their research to a larger audience

2.5.6 Offices

As designers, offices have a certain power in terms of project management. Further on, that power endures, or even increases, beside their implementation, or monitoring and assessment roles. Fundamentally being part of another universe, donors who are providing funding for their activities and for representative administrations are sometimes poorly informed about the realities of the sector. Their direct participation in the life of the institutional life of the sector is sometimes symbolical, but they have a real influence.

2.5.7 Development NGOs and Associations

Though there are national NGOs in the field of environment in general, and more specifically for the preservation of the littoral and marine environment, few national organizations are directly interested by traditional fishing. These include technical and strategic support partners for development, acting in the sector, such as ENDA, WWF, IUCN, ADPES, etc.

Their main difficulties:

- Competition (hence inconsistency of interventions)

- Inadequate expertise on some issues
- Weak level of internal democracy
- Weakness of their capacities to raise funding without losing their autonomy
- Competitive position in front of other players
- Their exploitation
- « Bait for earning livelihood »
- Corruption
- Poor knowledge of policies
- « Project » approach reducing the impact on policies, social changes
- Cohabitation of socio-professional organizations without a clear definition of their relations however

Their main assets:

- Their « objective » positioning (ideally)
- Their positions as intermediaries between various players
- Knowledge of field realities...

Their challenges:

- Becoming a real interface for the networking of various stakeholders
- Being the safeguard for better regulations

3. Reasons for putting in place a network on fishery policies in West Africa

REPAO is aiming at building a large network of fishery stakeholders in West Africa (traditional fishers, industrial fishers, processors, fish sellers, governmental and intergovernmental institutions, development partners, etc.) who subscribe to and share the clear vision, laid out further down and accept to aim at positive betting consisting of reconciling the quest for competitiveness on global markets, the satisfaction of the needs in food of the populations and the sustainable preservation of halieutical resources.

The formation of REPAO into a strong, cohesive and representative network corresponds to the following needs:

- On the political plan : using all its influence in the interests of fishing stakeholders at national, sub-regional and international levels to be taken into account
- On the social plan: strengthening the role of traditional fishing players' communities, mainly the participation of women in the fishing sector which is rather dominated by men; giving a legal status to female economic players – turning their profession into a source of power in their competition as fish merchant with fishing professionals
- On the normative plan: strengthening economic capacities within the profession in order to ensure a progressive move toward a sustainable economy and increasing the value of traditional fishing (on a longer run, the control by Africans of all the production phases of the fishery economy and the means to ensure the food self-sufficiency of the people of the sub-region as well as the quality of produce).
- On the methodological plan: adjusting the instruments and means for the economic development with the realities of the various social realities of the fishing players and promoting concrete and feasible examples of participative public policies.

The **objectives of REPAO** are the following:

- Overall objectives:
 - Creating the conditions of a regional dynamic in the management of resources
 - Arousing and promoting the enactment of consulted sub-regional fishing policies linking three dimension: Commercial value increase/ Sustainable management/ Food Security.
- Participative Objectives:
 - Encouraging the consulted and participative development of policies between fishery agents
 - Raising awareness on the sustainable management of fisheries
 - Contributing to the understanding of constraints and finding the means for the implementation of some forms of regulation among players.
- Research purposes:
 - Improving the state of knowledge within the West African fishing sectors and the new challenges stakeholders have to face.
- Formalization and political dialogue objectives:
 - Contributing to a better coherence of policies both at the sectorial as well as the national and sub-regional levels.

3.1. The political project of REPAO

A shared vision for the development of fishing in West Africa:

Achieving sustainable fishery managed in a participative way, taking into account the aspirations and rights of fishing communities, contributing significantly to national economies, sustained by a strong commitment of States as part of a sub-regional cooperation with an eye to ensuring food security, to reducing poverty through a good practice of trade and to restoring fisheries.

3.2. Missions

- Turning fishing into one of the levers in fighting poverty among grassroots' communities with a view to better contributing to sustainable development
- Encouraging the emergence of consulted and participative fishery policies jointly with stakeholders with enough capacities
- Ensuring consistence between markets, production systems and the preservation of halieutical resources at local, national, regional and international levels.

3.3. Objectives

- Encouraging the co-production of sustainable, consulted and participative fishing policies
- Encouraging the emergence of fishing operators having enough capacities to take on all types of positions
- Promoting the value increase of halieutical produce
- Promoting responsible, sustainable and fair halieutical produce marketing practices.

3.4. The intervention lines

↳ **Support for the co-management and governance of fisheries**

That intervention line has all its meaning with the needs for the participation of stakeholders in the regulation process of fishery activities, and also with the necessity to promote transparency and ethics in the relationships between stakeholders. The support for the co-management and governance of fisheries will allow REPAO to promote consultation and regulation spaces at all scales in the countries in the sub-region. This relates for example in Senegal to local fishery councils and consultation frameworks on the regulation of fisheries.

The support for co-management and governance of fisheries in West Africa will in this way allow REPAO to promote a participative, consulted, transparent, and ethical approach in the decision making process at all intervention levels. This sometimes requires, beyond the promotion of the approach, to reform the legal and economic environment so that the institutional framework could be adapted to transparency, participation and the respect for business ethics and the relations between operators. REPAO could then contribute to the reformation of the legal and economic framework.

↳ **Promotion of coherent and sustainable policies within fisheries**

The coherence of policies in the fishing industry is nowadays a major challenge in West Africa. In fact, the lack of coherence in the implementation policies of State brings about contradictions sometimes noted in the sectorial adjustment of fishing policies, between sectorial policies (for example fishing policies, marketing policies, and environmental policies), but also between national policies and regional policies.

However, some policies can be coherent, but with objectives which sometimes are contrary. For example a State can have in its fishing policy the objective of increasing its halieutical produce export incomes while at the same time caring about an appropriate supply of its national market. That is why the quest for coherence in public policies in the fishing industry must be a collective regulation exercise involving all categories of concerned stakeholders with a eye to sustainability, instead of being an arbitration devoted to a single category of stakeholders.

As far as fisheries in West Africa are concerned, REPAO has identified three priorities in terms of research of coherence in the policies of the fishing industry:

- Coherence of sectorial fishing policies at country level

The point here is seeing to it that one objective of the fishing sector and the intervention of related players does not sacrifice or does not prevent the attainment of another major objective of the sector, which on the longer run could jeopardize the economic, social and environmental sustainability.

For instance, the objective of halieutical produce export income increase of a country should not lead to a dramatic exploitation of demersal coastal species, which are already threatened to dye out, for, on a longer term all stakeholders would be losers.

▪ Coherence of national sectorial policies with fishing policies

The quest for the coherence of policies at the national level is aimed at conciliating the sectorial economic, commercial or environmental policies with fishing policies in the sole purpose of attaining a consulted regulation of interventions.

▪ Coherence of national fishing policies in the sub-region

The countries of the West African sub-region share the same marine ecosystem and the same socioeconomic realities (members of the LDCs, HIPC, etc.)

That is why the quest for the coherence, and even harmonization sometimes, of national policies is a necessity for the economic, social and environment sustainability of fisheries.

The creation of the Sub-regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC) has been a great step on the way to cooperation between States in the fishing industry.

However, in order to realize greater coherence between fishing policies in West Africa, it is necessary for all categories of stakeholders, through a dynamic of consultation, to be able to:

- Align their conditions of access to halieutical resources. For example, it is not justifiable that some countries keep on practicing free access while others require payments for fishing licenses and permits. In terms of fishing agreements with third countries, it is necessary to aim at the harmonization of negotiations and conditions for issuing licenses and permits to foreign operators.

- Specifying common preservation strategies for halieutical produce. Isolated initiatives in terms of the preservation of halieutical produce cannot achieve the expected impact. That is why it is necessary to realize a regional strategy for the sustainable preservation of halieutical resources that passes through the limitation of access to demersal coastal species, the harmonization of biological stoppage periods, the promotion of scientific cooperation, as well as controlling and supervision as part of follow-up.

↳ **Strengthening the capacities of traditional fishery professional organizations and their networking**

The point here is to reinforce the technical, political and organizational capacities of traditional fishery professional organizations across West Africa. This line gathers several sub-lines that can be summed up as follows:

- Negotiation capacity building
- Support of professionals for the respect of sanitary and hygienic standards for halieutical produce
- Lobbying and advocacy development capacity building
- Their networking or strengthening existing networks

↳ **Support for the value increase of halieutical produce**

In front of the decline of halieutical reserves and unclear market prospects, producers should focus on the quest for added value as a viable alternative to export their fresh produce to the European market.

That is why it is important for West African fisheries to promote a better value increase of halieutical produce, particularly by traditional processing.

That support for small-scale processing goes from the improvement of infrastructures to capacity building through the facilitation of access to financial resources.

↳ **Support for responsible, sustainable and fair trade**

Supporting operators for a responsible, sustainable and fair trade refers to urging to responsible and sustainable fishery practices so that halieutical produce offered for trade can be labeled, or even eco-labeled as product from “fair and sustainable fishing”.

This also refers to supporting players of fishing in having better market access. The following occurs:

- Better understanding of the challenges related to trade liberalization under the aegis of the WTO.
- Cost reduction and improvement of transportation conditions
- Fighting the capture and marketing of immature species
- Promoting incentive measures for supplying local markets
- Strengthening the distribution and preservations means of fresh halieutical produce
- Development of market channels of processed products
- Promotion of local seafood consumption.