Smart Fiche 24

by INDIAN OCEAN COMMISSION

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Lessons learned from 'pilot projects' related to the management of coastal fisheries

Part I - Relevance of the concept of pilot projects in the context of coastal fisheries management

Introduction

Pilot projects have greatly contributed to the success of the SmartFish Programme if reference is made to the first tangible effects and impacts of most of these projects. At the same time, SmartFish is continually adapting its approach by taking on board lessons learned as pilot projects are implemented, to improve practices, consolidate achievements, increase impacts and to work on their sustainability.

Two workshops were held in 2013 and 2014, bringing together representatives from most of the 20 countries eligible for the programme as well as representatives from several development partners[1]. These workshops highlighted that, apart from a couple of rare exceptions, most of the initiatives undertaken in the region so far to address planning issues, have produced few tangible results. In particular, exchanges revealed that conventional approaches were placing too much emphasis on fisheries analysis rather than action.

The findings of these two sub-regional workshops strengthened the SmartFish Programme's willingness to continue its work and enhance its efforts to promote pilot projects. It is now necessary to highlight some of the lessons learned on the relevance of initiatives aimed at improving fisheries management (SmartFiche 24) and improving the chances of success (SmartFiche 28). Such an analysis was the subject of a detailed report by an independent consultant, and was based on activity reports, evaluations, administrative documents and extensive interviews with members of the SmartFish project's implementation team[2]. Factsheets 24 and 28 are taken from this report[3].

What is a pilot project in the context of this analysis?

In its broadest sense, the term 'pilot project' refers to an initiative that aims to validate an experimental approach to demonstrate its validity and usefulness. More specifically, some of the concepts associated with the notion of pilot projects related to fisheries management are:

- A project concerned with the management of 'emblematic' resources or resources of common interest to the countries of the region in terms of their methods of exploitation and enhancement;
- A project with a well-defined scope of intervention concerning a fishery, sector and/or fishing zone, addressing targeted themes which would act as entry points for further reforms of the management system;

1 Workshop for the preparation of development plans for specific fisheries (Zanzibar, July 2013); and Workshop on new approaches for sustainable fisheries: lessons learned from SmartFish and other projects (Seychelles, March 2014).

2 This is not an *ex-post* analysis as certain projects are still on going.

3 C. Breuil (2016), Leçons apprises par le Programme SmartFish de ses expériences de projets pilotes portant sur la gestion de pêcheries spécifiques, Commission de l'Océan Indien

- An intervention offering a practical and concrete framework enabling different institutions, public and private, to work and interact with each other around a common project. This would make it possible to develop or consolidate partnerships between institutions (public-public, private-community, public-private-community) and contribute to the structuring of their work;
- A project that supports local dynamics and involves local partners in its implementation (decentralised administration, socio-professional organisations, NGOs, national experts) with a view to increase project efficiency and sustainability. It should be noted that the existence of minimum structures and institutional mechanisms for consultation or participatory management constitute eligibility conditions for a pilot project, as the aim is to strengthen or operationalize existing mechanisms;
- A project that can serve as a laboratory for experimentation and the development of new approaches to address certain sectoral issues more effectively, such as reducing fishing pressure in coastal areas, regulating access to resources, or even adopting and implementing management measures based on the effective participation of fisheries stakeholders and taking into account the various interactions throughout the value chain;
- An intervention set up to run over a certain length of time to provide the opportunity to work on institutional processes, which can not be done during an intervention for a specific outcome such as conducting a study or drafting a planning document, organising a workshop or a training course, etc. At the same time however, given the experimental nature of the pilot project there has to be a set time frame (an average of 2-3 years). The idea behind the pilot project concept being that the intervention can be replicated later in other fisheries or sectors, or extended to other areas, under the leadership of the public institutions in which they are anchored;
- An external intervention favouring support rather than substitution and which takes into account the operational, technical and financial realities of the countries in order to be as close as possible to 'in vivo' experimentation conditions with a view to allow ownership and replication;
- An action-oriented intervention and the achievement of tangible results to improve the management system, whilst relying on a relatively general intervention framework indicating the project's main work components and activities. This allows for the possibility to adjust activities during project implementation and to apply the principle of learning by doing;
- An initiative that could be reproduced by, or serve as a model for, countries in the region, both in terms of how they are designed and implemented and what approaches are used to improve the effectiveness of public action in the management of the fisheries sector.

Pilot projects carried out under the SmartFish project

This analysis is based on eight pilot projects that experienced varying levels of development and success. The two fact sheets on lessons learned from the pilot projects attempt to summarize the main conclusions drawn from all the projects. The type of intervention and the objective of each project are summarized below. A more detailed analysis of most of them is also available as a Smart Fiche[4].

Management of the octopus fishery in Rodrigues

Type of intervention	Partnership with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (RRA) to promote initiatives to redress the situation of the octopus fishery from a bio-ecological and economic point of view.
Objective	Initiate a process to regulate access to resources, beginning with the implementation of a technical measure for the management of the octopus fishery in Rodrigues (introduction of a period of biological rest)
Impacts	- Institutionalization of the closure in the fisheries management system - Improved situation for communities in terms of resources and revenue - Sustainable change in attitudes conducive to further reform of the management system (access regulations) - Local capacity building in terms of the preparation, implementation and monitoring of management measures

Management of the octopus fishery in Mauritius

Type of intervention	Provide support to the Ministry of Fisheries for the introduction of specific measures for the seasonal, nationwide closure of the octopus fishery
Objective	Contribute to the government's efforts to reduce the fishing effort of octopus resources by promoting the establishment of a biological rest period
Impacts	- Emergence of a dialogue between the administration and the fishing communities on the management of coastal fisheries, hitherto undeveloped - Strengthened key fisheries management services in coastal fishing areas: statistical monitoring, MCS to implement the existing regulatory framework - Initiation of discussions with fishing authorities concerning access regulations - Strengthened collaboration mechanisms between government departments and between the government and NGOs - Actions that prove that specific management measures per fishery can produce effects that improve the management of small-scale fisheries

Collaborative management of coastal fisheries in Zanzibar (also focused on octopus resources)

Type of intervention	Provide support to the Ministry of Fisheries to promote appropriate and effective collaborative management mechanisms for coastal fisheries in Zanzibar
Objective	Demonstrate the feasibility of and produce recommendations for improved legal and institutional arrangements in support of the collaborative management of fisheries in Zanzibar using the management of the octopus fishery, including the establishment of a biological rest period, as an entry point for this process
Impacts	- Strengthened links between the administration, communities and locally elected representatives within the local marine conservation area (PECCA) and capacity building of local fisheries management committees, to develop other activities related to management of natural resources - Interest of the central administration to expand the closure of the octopus fishing to cover the whole of Zanzibar and in using best practices and lessons learned from the pilot project in the management of other fisheries

Management of the lobster fishery in Madagascar

Type of intervention	Promotion of local initiatives for the decentralized management of the lobster fishery in southern of Madagascar
Objective	Accompany village committees in the process of developing, implementing and monitoring local conventions (Dina) to support the development of the lobster fishery, including spatial management measures
Impacts	- Confirmation, by example, of the relevance of promoting decentralized management mechanisms and measures at the community level for the management of the lobster fishery in a test zone in southern Madagascar - Reproduction of the model tested and validated in Sainte Luce in two other neighbouring villages - Strengthened key services in lobster fishery management

Management of the sea cucumber fishery in Madagascar

Type of intervention	Promotion of local initiatives for the decentralized management of the sea cucumber fishery in Assassins Bay
Objective	Evaluate the feasibility of a management plan for the sea cucumber fishery in Assassins Bay based on a system of local conventions (Dina), including spatial management measures
Impacts	- Dynamics of a co-management plan initiated: appropriate follow up would be desirable in order to meet the expectations aroused by the project and not taint future relationships between communities and development partners

Management of the mangrove crab fishery in Madagascar

Type of intervention	Promotion of multi-thematic initiatives to ensure the sustainability of the mangrove crab fishery and its value chains and increase its contribution to economic and social development in Madagascar
Objective	Promote the adoption of resource-friendly fishing practices and respect for natural habitats (mangroves) at the local level as well as implementation of management measures to prevent the collapse of crab stocks throughout Madagascar
Impacts	- Sustainable reduction of post-harvest losses initiated (an estimated reduction of a third since the start of the project) - Malagasy population well informed of the economic, social and environmental issues related to the exploitation and enhancement of the mangrove crab fishery - Recognition of the role of local communities in the sustainable management of crab and mangrove ecosystems - Dynamics of strengthening the management system of the mangrove crab fishery initiated

Management of the sea cucumber fishery in Seychelles

Type of intervention	Promotion of a partnership between the administration and sector operators for the sustainable management of the sea cucumber fishery in Seychelles from an ecological, social and economic point of view
Objective	Provide technical support for the implementation of a Memorandum of Understanding between the administration and operators aimed, inter alia, at strengthening the management system of the sea cucumber fishery through the introduction and effective implementation of a conservation measure (minimum weight) based on bioeconomic considerations
Impacts	- Re-launch of the dialogue between the administration and stakeholders (which had been reduced to a minimum since 2005 due to different views of options proposed in a management plan) - Expulsion of fishermen divers not following sanitary regulations whilst working. - Strengthened fisheries management system, based on partnerships, initiated

Collaborative development and management of a fishery using anchored fish aggregating devices (FAD) anchored in Kenya

Type of intervention	Partnership with a development project to promote the sustainable operation and management of a coastal fishery using fish aggregating devices (FADs)
Objective	Test an innovative approach, based on community involvement at different stages of the development and management process, of an anchored FAD fishery in Kenya, taking into account lessons learned from past experiences in the region
Impacts	- Contribution to the implementation of Kenya's co-management policy based on the Beach Management Unit (BMU) concept and capacity building of these co-management bodies - Strengthened research (KMFRI) as a key service for the development and management of coastal fisheries - Development of an artisanal anchored FAD, allowing a reduction in fishing pressure on reef resources

4 *Octopus*: SF 12 and 25. ***Crab***: SF 3 and 29. *Sea Cucumber:* SF 13. *Lobster*: SF 26. DCP: SF 30.

Relevance of the pilot project concept in the context of initiatives to improve the management of the fisheries sector

Closing the gap between public and private interests

The pilot projects, via the results and undeniable impacts obtained by some of them, have made it possible to show that it is possible to satisfy public and private interests through planning/management approaches. And that this can be done through incremental (small steps) and adaptive approaches. This confirms that the well-known saying "where there's a will, there's a way", is valid even in the field of fisheries management, which is more commonly known for its lack of action. Beyond this assertion, positive results of a pilot project also generate confidence and encourage the various actors to go further in management measures, in particular those relating to access regulations, as access is a key development issue.

In most cases, the concept of a pilot project facilitates the implementation of small-scale experiments within a management system, whilst at the same time adjusting interventions, with the aim of demonstrating the advantages and benefits that communities and operators could derive from it. Secondly, it allows the scope of intervention to be gradually extended, relying, as appropriate, on advocacy and communication activities. The basic principle is to build on successes at the local level before helping stakeholders, thereafter, to expand/disseminate management measures or innovations on a larger scale (fishery, value chain and/or nationwide).

When convinced of the merits and added value of a project (management measures, technological innovation, health standards, etc.) it is clear that communities and private operators can spontaneously develop partnerships with the administration and/or development partners to carry out projects to improve the sustainability of resources, which in turn increases project effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. It is always easier to build on success.

Strengthening management services through appropriate actions

Another lesson is that management services are much more likely to be revealed through concrete actions. For example, a statistical system set up to primarily satisfy an administrative request is generally costly. Moreover, it is difficult to ask for community participation in this type of context. On the other hand, a statistical system that supports community perceptions about project results and impacts takes on a completely different dimension, and community participation to provide a quality service at a lower cost will be facilitated. The implementation of pilot projects of common interest, involving the improvement of given management services (e.g. research, MCS), will also have a structuring effect on how public and private institutions function and on interactions (dialogue, partnerships, trust) between these institutions.

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Value chain approach: a thousand and one ways towards management

The value chain approach, promoted through the concept of pilot projects, is a good entry point for management as it makes it possible to clearly identify social and economic dynamics that have a direct or indirect impact on resources and the ecosystems which support them. It also makes it possible to identify relevant and realistic entry points to drive change for the benefit of all. The value chain approach also makes it possible to identify effective strategies to regulate fishing pressure by relying on market mechanisms and/or the organisation of value chains.

Another lesson is that it is possible to aim for and achieve results in the field of management, without necessarily registering targeted actions in this area at the outset. The most important thing is to remain attentive to the project's evolution and to seize opportunities when they arise, whether technical, economic, commercial or political.

'Pilot' projects, driving change

Pilot projects may cause unexpected impacts on elements of the fisheries governance system that do not fall directly under the project's sphere of intervention. What is important to note is that, through a limited entry point, a pilot project can indirectly boost the dynamics for dialogue and reforms in the fisheries management system by highlighting dysfunctions.

Thus this type of project allows management system reforms to be initiated by offering opportunities to build such reforms on successes. Pilot projects can encourage governments to reconsider how they govern the sector and initiate changes in management systems. A more traditional approach, such as supporting the revision of a sector policy document or the formulation of a management plan, using expert reports and national workshops, would prove more difficult to initiate change. However, these two approaches, which must remain complementary, should not be opposed.

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Blue Tower, 5th floor, rue de l'Institut - Ebene - Mauritius
Tel: (+230) 402 6100 - Fax: (+230) 466 0160
E-mail: smartfish@fao.org - smartfish@coi-ioc.org
Web sites: www.smartfish-coi.org
www.fao.org - www.coi-ioc.org

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Prepared by

Clotilde Bodiguel, Senior Technical Advisor, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Christophe Breuil, Consultant, SmartFish

Yann Yvergniaux, Socio-economist, SmartFish

INDIAN OCEAN COMMISSION

Smart Fish

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