



# BLUE FOOD VALUE CHAIN SOLUTIONS

## The Gambia

MOBILISING KNOWLEDGE

# Teaching Gambian oyster harvesters how to swim

### ISSUE

Going to work can be hazardous for Gambian oyster harvesters. It means paddling through the estuary of the Gambia River in small canoes to the mangroves where they harvest. Most of these women cannot swim. Once they arrive at the shallow waters of their collection site, they can breathe a sigh of relief. However, accidents occur when travelling to and from the mangroves. And even if nothing happens, the spectre of their canoe capsizing in bad weather can cause considerable anxiety.

### ACTIONS TAKEN

FISH4ACP has organized a six-week swimming programme for Gambian oyster harvesters. The training was set up and rolled out in collaboration with the Gambia Navy. The training was conducted in different local languages to ensure the participants could understand fully. The programme included four weeks of pool training and two weeks of river training, allowing trainees to gain enough competence to be able to float and reach the shore in case of an accident. Before the training started, all the trainees underwent a medical check-up, and a medical doctor was present during the entire training.

# FISH4ACP

Unlocking the potential of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific



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LOCATION	Tanbi Wetlands, Great Banjul Area and West Coast Region
PARTNERS	The Gambia Navy
TARGET	Women oyster harvesters
DURATION	Six weeks
COST (USD)	24 000

“This is a game-changer. We used to be really scared when going to collect oysters. Now, we feel safer on the water and we’re more confident in our work. The swimming course is truly transformative.”

Marie Sambou  
Oyster harvester



## → RESULTS

With a team of 15 instructors, the Gambia Navy trained 60 harvesters from seven communities. Now that they have adequate swimming skills, these women can navigate their work environment more safely, reducing occupational risks and boosting self-confidence. Beyond safety, the programme fostered personal growth among oyster harvesters by adding a crucial skill and allowing them to learn with their peers, enhancing their overall well-being. FISH4ACP will support at least three additional trainings in 2024, benefiting a total of 240 women, accounting for almost 20 percent of the oyster harvesters in the country.

## → POTENTIAL FOR SYSTEM CHANGE

Creating a safer and more secure working environment, while empowering women oyster harvesters, will improve the performance of the oyster sector and attract a much-needed younger generation.

## → SUSTAINABILITY & TRANSFERABILITY

The basic swimming course is sustainable, because it transfers skills that accompany the beneficiaries throughout their lives. It can be easily transferred, provided that there are capable trainers and the necessary budget is available.

## → OUR GOAL

Make mangrove oyster sector more productive and sustainable while improving local food security and incomes of female harvesters.



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## CONTACT

✉ Khadiyatou Diallo  
National Professional Officer, FISH4ACP  
fish4acp@fao.org

🌐 [fao.org/fish4acp/the-gambia](https://fao.org/fish4acp/the-gambia)



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Fisheries and Aquaculture – Natural Resources and Sustainable Production  
**FISH4ACP@fao.org**

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations



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