

SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES LIVELIHOODS PROGRAMME



NEW DIRECTIONS IN FISHERIES



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

NEW DIRECTIONS IN FISHERIES

Policies for strengthening fisherfolk's livelihoods, improving the contribution of fisheries to poverty reduction and sustaining fishery resources

Fish resources are a source of food, employment and wealth. Fisheries management is therefore a development issue as well as an environmental one. Failures in governance systems that lead to overfishing also increase the vulnerability of fisherfolk and undermine the fishery sector's economic and social contributions.

Resource decline, the economic role of fisheries and the poverty and vulnerability of fisherfolk are related in complex ways. The drivers of overfishing and the causes of fisherfolk's poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion often lie outside the fishery sector or are not exclusive to it. Previous development actions for the fisheries sector have aimed at reducing poverty through improvements in technology, infrastructure and market-led policy reform. These interventions have had limited success and there is a need to re-examine the causes of poverty and develop new strategies for poverty reduction.

Governance and poverty reduction in fishing-dependent communities frequently require solutions to problems that are outside the sector. New thinking and new partnerships are needed to improve the contribution of fisheries to sustainable development, through responsible fishing. The Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme has launched a series of policy briefs entitled 'New Directions in Fisheries' that responds to these imperatives.

'NEW DIRECTIONS IN FISHERIES' AIMS TO:

- Highlight the different ways in which fisheries currently contribute to poverty reduction and food security and suggest how these contributions may be increased
- Promote policies and actions for poverty reduction that build on existing strengths in the livelihood systems of fisherfolk and that do not lead to increased levels of fishery resource exploitation
- Advise on specific measures that can be taken to reduce poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion of people involved in small-scale fishing and related activities
- Support partnerships between fishing sector interests and other development actors to address the factors that make fish stocks vulnerable to depletion and fisherfolk vulnerable to falling into poverty

WHAT IS THE SFLP?

The Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme (SFLP) is a partnership between the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (DFID) and 25 participating countries in West and Western Central Africa. SFLP aims to contribute to reducing poverty in coastal and riparian communities by improving the livelihoods of people dependent on fishery and aquatic resources.



The SFLP has adopted the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach to poverty reduction and works to implement the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries to sustain fishery resources. The programme has thus promoted strategies for poverty reduction that reinforce peoples' existing capabilities, are participatory and empowering, and take into account the limitations of resource renewability.

For more information on the programme see www.sflp.org

PARTNERSHIPS FOR POLICY CHANGE:

Each policy brief in the series 'New Directions in Fisheries' connects practical experience of improving fisheries governance and reducing poverty among fishing-dependent people in West and Central Africa with new thinking and evolving regional and global policy agendas. From this evidence and analysis, a set of recommendations is developed for a cross-sectoral group of relevant development actors - government ministries, donors, international organizations and NGOs and civil society groups.

The strategies for development and responsible fisheries management proposed in the policy briefs are designed to build on the strengths of fisherfolk's livelihoods and to support their existing ways of dealing with problems and constraints. These briefs have been developed by listening to people at the fish market, on the shore and at the landing site. The purpose of the policy briefs is to ensure that fisherfolk's concerns and suggestions for positive change are heard by those with the power to influence their livelihoods.

DEFINING POVERTY, VULNERABILITY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

• While poverty has often been defined and measured in terms of income or assets alone, the SFLP approach draws on recent broader definitions, such as: *"a human condition characterized by the sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights"*

(UN Committee on Social, Economic, and Cultural Rights, 2001)



• Vulnerability comprises people's exposure to risks, the sensitivity of livelihood systems to these risks and limited ability to cope with and adapt to them.

• Social exclusion results from negative social and power relations with others; the marginalized are those excluded from political, social and economic opportunities enjoyed by other citizens.

• Income and asset poverty, social exclusion and vulnerability are related

'states of being' in which people find themselves. For example, people can become economically and politically marginalized because they live in poverty, or can become impoverished because they are excluded from the rights and opportunities available to others, sometimes on grounds of ethnicity, citizenship or gender.



**CROSS-SECTORAL FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH FISHERFOLK'S
VULNERABILITY AND SFLP RESPONSES TO THEM**

Resource decline and conflict: weak users' rights over resources

- Developing rights-based fishing; strengthening the capacity of fishing organizations; identifying opportunities for fish stock enhancement and aquaculture

Fisheries dependence: lack of access to alternative livelihoods

- Support for livelihood diversification

Lack of access to financial services: savings, credit, insurance, business management

- Providing microfinancial services, including savings provision; sensitizing service providers to the needs of fishing communities

Low levels of literacy and vocational skills

- Ensuring equitable access to educational services including skill development and adult literacy; developing methods of educational service delivery appropriate to remote and often mobile communities

Limited access to health services: high incidence of 'killer' diseases, such as HIV, malaria and TB

- Awareness-raising of the need to improve access to health services; ensuring fisherfolk at risk are included in national malaria and HIV prevention and AIDS treatment and mitigation programmes

Lack of social protection: theft of productive assets such as livestock, fishing boats, engines and gear

- Community-building; improving access to judicial services; empowerment of vulnerable groups

Limited human rights: social exclusion on grounds of ethnicity, gender, citizenship; unsafe and/or exploitative working conditions

- Empowering women; negotiation of access rights among settled and migrant fisherfolk; addressing labour, international migrants' and children's rights

Intersectoral conflicts: industrial fisheries, oil production, irrigation and hydropower, wetland drainage and coastal development

- Ensuring fishing interests are fairly represented in integrated resource management and planning processes; building partnerships and coalitions to strengthen fisherfolks' negotiation capacity

Globalization: small-scale fisherfolk excluded from benefits of global market integration

- Supporting the small-scale sector to comply with international product quality standards and respond to new market opportunities

Decentralization: risks of increased tax burdens; lack of recognition in local development planning

- Fostering an understanding of the contributions and needs of small-scale fisheries; promoting fair taxation and social services for fishing communities

Climate change: coastal and riparian populations are exposed to climate-related hazards and processes that may affect resource stability and productivity

- Building adaptive institutions; maintaining or enhancing resilience of social-ecological systems

THESE POLICY BRIEFS DESCRIBE APPROACHES TO ADDRESS SUCH FACTORS BY BUILDING ON PEOPLE'S EXISTING WAYS OF MANAGING THREATS TO THEIR LIVELIHOODS.

To read the briefs, visit : <http://www.sflp.org>

How the briefs were developed:

The series of policy briefs was conceived and edited by **Benoit Horemans** (SFLP Programme Co-ordinator, FAO, Rome) and **Edward Allison** (Overseas Development Group, University of East Anglia, U.K.). Some of the briefs were also written by these authors. **Tina Farmer** (Fisheries Department, FAO, Rome) edited the draft policy briefs to ensure clarity, coherence and style.

For all the briefs in the series, evidence from SFLP field activities (policy influencing processes, pilot projects, community projects) was synthesized by members of the SFLP Regional Support Unit in Cotonou, Benin, assisted by consultants recruited in the countries where activities were taking place. To connect field experience with emerging regional and global policy agendas, experts were commissioned - often from outside the fishery sector - to produce background papers from which the policy briefs were drawn. Key messages and findings were discussed during workshops and consultations with colleagues from Fisheries and other departments in FAO headquarters.

Design: www.stailfab.it

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