

Overview of the Fisheries Sector in the Gambia

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Short Communication

Preface

The data has been collected during the USAID BaNafaa ("fruits of the sea" in the local language) project mid-term evaluation, an USAID/WA funded project, carried out from September 2012 to March 2013. The data of the overview are mainly from the Department of State for fisheries and water resources, 2007[1]. Draft fisheries policy of the Gambia, department of state for fisheries and water resources, 2007 and the West African Association for the Development of Artisanal Fisheries (WADAF) [2]. Diagnostic Study for the Capacities of the Fisheries Professional Organization (Pos): country report for the republic of the Gambia. French development agency and by direct observations.

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The Gambia

The Republic of The Gambia is located in the central part of West Africa (enclosed in the Republic of Senegal, formerly Senegambia) and its coastal area is boarded by the eastern central Atlantic Ocean and can be classified as one of the richest fishing zones of the world.

The Gambian fisheries resources

The fisheries in the Republic of The Gambia can be identified in the marine, brackish and freshwater regimes. The Gambia owns an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 200 nautical miles and a territorial sea extending to 12 nautical miles from the geographical coastal area, with a continental estimated shelf area of about 4.000 square kilometers and an EEZ of nearly 10.500 square kilometers. The main river of The Gambia and its estuary has its source in the Fouta Djallon highlands in the republic of guinea (Conakry). Fish is an important part of the dietary intake, supplying about 40% of the total animal protein consumed in The Gambia.

Republic of The Gambia has estimated considerable marine and freshwater fisheries resources. The marine fish resources are supported by the freshwater inflows of the River Gambia with substantial nutrients that attract marine fish species for feeding and spawning purposes. There are over 500 marine fish species which are usually classified in Demersal and pelagic. The Demersal species include groupers, sea breams, grunts, croakers and snappers etc. The small

pelagic species common in the area are two sardinellas species (*Sardinella aurita* and *Sardinella maderensis*), the horse mackerels species (*Trachurus traciae*, *Trachurus trachurus* and *Caranx rhoncus*) and mackerel (*Scomber japonicus*). The Gambia together with three other coastal countries, namely Morocco, Mauritania and Senegal have since 1995 been assisted with annual hydro-acoustic surveys of the small pelagic fish stocks under the project, GCP/INT/730/NOR, jointly implemented by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Norwegian Institute of Marine Research (IMR). In 2004, a study of fish resources in the river Gambia by the french Institute for Research and Development (IRD) in collaboration with the fisheries department revealed that the brackish and estuarine parts of the river are rich in terms of species biodiversity and abundance. The study had identified about 70 fish families, several of them (e.g. *Carangidae*, *Drepaneidae*, *Clupeidae*, *Haemulidae*, *Polynemidae*, *Cichlidae*, *Scianidae*, *Cynoglossidae*), of commercial significance.

Industrial Fishery

The industrial fishery sub-sector was characterized in 2005 by the presence of 20 registered companies and 8 factories certified to export their products to European Union countries. The fishing companies obtains licenses by government for their fishing vessels (mainly trawlers) for fishing in the Gambian waters, but mainly land, process, package and label their catches as foreign product in the neighboring countries ports (e.g. Senegal), due the lack of equipped fishing ports and facilities in The Gambia. The total catch by industrial fishing vessels in 2005 was been is estimated in 4,600 MT. About 31 trawlers were licensed to operate in the Gambian waters during 2005, most of them granted to access through the senegal-gambia agreement on maritime fisheries. Important to note that the foreign fishing vessels do not spend the whole licensing period in the Gambian waters, targeting certain species seasonally migrating within sub-regional waters. About 2000 people was been employed in 2007 in the industrial sub-sector, mainly registered as workers in the processing factories (mainly women).

Small-scale/artisanal fishery

The sub-sector plays a significant role from a nutritional point of view, being the main supplier of animal protein in the diets of most Gambians. The small-scale/artisanal fishery is carried out in marine, estuarine, brackish and freshwater. The sub-sector is composed by motorized (about 40% estimated motorized) and un-motorized fishing canoes, using traditional and small-scale fishing practices and tackles. The fishermen uses diverse fishing gears, such as entangling/surrounding nets, bottom gill nets, hand and long-lines, cast nets and traps. Stow nets are used for the catching in the river tributaries. Women are engaged mainly in collection and processing of oysters,

fish processing and commercialization. The small-scale/artisanal fishery sub-sector supplies products to the local consumers and shrimps, cephalopods and high valued species to the processing facilities. Originally practiced on a subsistence basis, the small-scale/artisanal fishery is today targeting commercial species, due to increasing market demand. Despite the fact that the main part of the fishermen are still targeting fish for supplying the local market demand, a significant number of them are now engaged in fishing high valued species, such as soles, snappers and cephalopods. This high valued species are processed in processing facilities for exports or for the tourism internal market demand. The results of the frame survey carried out in 2006 showed that there were 1,410 head fishermen operating in all fish landing sites in The Gambia, of these 805 was Gambian nationals and 605 foreigners (mainly Senegalese). These head fishermen were found to provide employment to 4,694 assistant fishermen, of which 78% of the total was paid and 22% are unpaid family members. Regarding the fishing behavior and status, 1,005 fishermen (71% of the total) was found to be fulltime, while the remaining 405 fishermen (29%) operated on a part-time basis. The survey founded that operating in the country there were 1.061 fishermen (75% of the total) sedentary and 349 (25%) migratory, most of them (74% of the total) resulted owners of the canoes, followed by the ones using joint ownerships (partnerships) with the 14% of the total. In 2006, there were 1,082 un-motorized and 625 motorized canoes. The survey revealed that 1,329 fishermen (94%) used canoes for fishing and the most common type of canoe used was the dug-out with the 696 boats (50% of the total), followed by the planked-dugout with the 37%.

Small scale/artisanal inland fisheries

The inland fishery is less developed such as the coastal one and the operators often practice traditional methods. This employs both subsistence and traditional commercial fishers, whose occasionally sell to the industrial companies their catches of shrimps, sole and other high valued species. The riverine fishery resources are estimated and considered to be under exploited, due to the low level of fishing effort. In 2006, the frame survey results showed that there were 481 fishermen operating inland, of which 253 Gambians (mostly fishing on part-time basis, after the farming season). Concerning the catches, some of them include shad (*Ethmalosa fimbriata*), threadfin (*Polynemidae spp.*), marine catfish (*Arius spp.*) and sole species (*Cynoglossidae spp.*). These anadromus fishes migrate in the river during the dry season. The area is also characterized by the shrimp’s fishery, activity increasing due to the high economic return. The shrimps are caught by the artisanal fishermen and sold to industrial companies for processing and export. The middle and upper part of the river have a freshwater regime where tilapia (*Tilapia nilotica*) and catfish (*Clarias luzerra*) are important fish catches.

Market

The fishery products are marketed fish or processed. Fish and fish products accounted for approximately 15% of the total export (excluding re-exports) in 2007. The bulk of this (about 80%) of fish and fish export is for the European Union market. Other export destinations include West Africa, Africa and Asia countries. Parts of the processed fishery products (smoked or dried) are marketed within the country, especially in the internal areas and part of them is exported to the neighboring West African countries. The artisanal catch of high value fish species (shrimps, soles, sea-breams, lobsters

and cephalopods) are normally purchased by the industrial fishing companies for the processing in the factories, adding value and exporting mainly to European Union countries. Fish processing is still traditional and products are usually dried or smoked. The artisanal fish catch, apart from being processed (dried and/or smoked) is also delivered fresh to the city, town and village markets within the coastal areas and in some of the main growing centers in the rural districts. Some of the processed fishery products (smoked or dried) are marketed within the country especially in the inland markets

Governance

Institutional framework: The responsibility for the management, development and conservation of the marine and inland fisheries resources currently is under the direct policy and supervision of the Minister of State isheries and water resources and the technical branchthe department of state responsible for Fisheries with the fisheries department as its technical departments. The Fisheries Sector is under the direct administration of the department of fisheries resources. The Department headed by a director who is assisted by one assistant director is composed by three units, headed by a principal fisheries officer and is charged with the responsibility of planning, managing, developing and implementing strategies for the development and management of the fisheries sector including the responsibility for research, providing scientific advice, assisting and providing services to all operators, stakeholders and potential investors amongst many others (Figure 1).

The figure in the following page (courtesy of Department of Fisheries, January 2013) shows the composition of the department.

According to the nominal role of the fisheries department, there are supposed 72 technical staffs in the Department, of which the nominal role stated that about 19 technical positions are vacant (Department of Fisheries, January 2013).

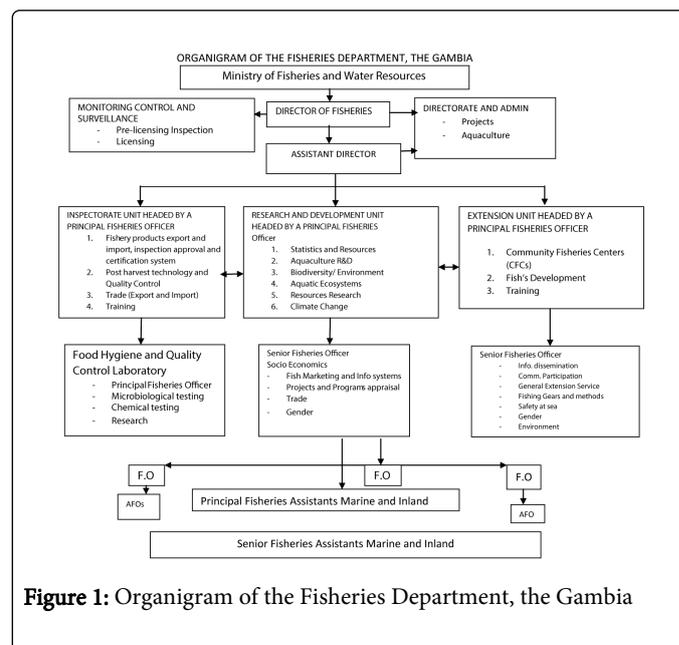


Figure 1: Organigram of the Fisheries Department, the Gambia

Policy and legal framework

The policy, legal and management framework for the fisheries in the Gambia is composed by the fisheries policy 2007, the fish act 2007 and its associate 2008 fisheries regulation. The fish act 2007 provides for the sustainable utilization, development management and conservation of fisheries and aquaculture resources in the Gambia. The department currently has one fisheries strategy document, running from 2012-2015 and prepared with assistance from the enhanced integrated framework program in the ministry of trade, industry and regional integration & employment (fisheries department, 2012). there are also fisheries management plans for shrimp, sardinella, sole and catfish species, prepared in 2009. Despite the gambian government has adopted a decentralisation policy, the fisheries sector is not yet fully decentralised, in terms of establishment of fisheries administration units and technical staff availability in municipalities, the city council and fish landing sites. The department has 155 fish landing sites all over the country, 15 of these are coastal and the other is inland sites. the fisheries officers staff at the various landing sites in the country are directly supervised and report directly to their superiors at the ministry headquarter or department of fisheries, as the municipal authorities do not have any other fisheries management responsibilities than to collect the revenues from the fishermen. A fisheries monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) unit is assigned the coordination of this task in collaboration with the Gambia Navy (GN). The GN provides sea patrols and are unique responsible for the enforcement. The purpose for establishing the monitoring, control and surveillance in the fisheries is essentially to enforce the existing management systems and protect the resources from illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing [3]. The MCS unit is empowered by the fisheries act, that have empowered the Gambian public officers and civil society to enforce management and co-management measures aimed at the sustainable management and protection of the marine resources. It should be noted that fisheries resources within the sub-region are generally shared. it is in recognition of this phenomenon that the seven countries, namely : the Gambia, Senegal, Mauritania, guinea (Bissau), guinea, Cape Verde and Sierra Leone decided to set up the sub-regional fisheries commission (SRFC) a regional fisheries organization, whose objectives are to reinforce cooperation and coordination of the management of the mainly marine fisheries resources among member states. To this effect, surveillance operations coordinating unit (SOCU) has been established to sustainable manage and protect the entire sub-region marine resources.

Civil society representation and participation

The fish act 2007 empowers the minister responsible for fisheries to devolve fisheries management responsibilities to local authorities. this authority has been exercised through the establishment of community fisheries centres and fishery advisory committees. it has also further empowered local communities to form fisheries professional organisation (FPOS). in line with this, several national community organisations have been formed. the most prominent ones are; national association of artisanal fisheries operators (NAAFO), which has become national association Gambia artisanal fisheries development agency (GAMFIDA), try women's oyster harvesting association and association of Gambian fishing companies (TAGFC) which serve as apex bodies charged with responsibility to coordinate activities of its affiliated association country wide in the areas of responsible fishing.

there are six civil society organizations in the Gambia that aim to provide non-governmental stakeholders with representation in the fisheries sector governance process: Association of Gambian Fishing Companies (TAGFC), community based sole committee (la-coms), Gambia Artisanal Fisheries Development Association (GAMFIDA), National Association of Artisanal Fisheries Operators (NAAFO), national sole co-management committee (Nascom), and try women oyster association. Within fisheries co-management, each organization enables their respective stakeholders to realize the power of working collectively for a common vision and sharing a common understanding of the process to achieve that vision. Currently, among all stakeholder groups, Nascom serves as the umbrella organization that facilitates co-management coordination and information exchange, and includes stakeholder representation from GAMFIDA, NAAFO, and TAGFC. Below is a description of each organization and their role in the Gambia's co-management process.

Association Of Gambian Fishing Companies (TAGFC): The association of Gambian fishing companies was formed to serve as a body which would address the needs, problems and constraints of operators in the industrial fishery sub-sector. TAGFC is the national association created in and recognized by government of the Gambia to coordinate the affiliation of industrial fish processing establishments including facilitation of access of foreign fishing vessels, to Gambian fisheries resources. It has six affiliated fishing companies and an individual membership base of over 20 members comprising fishing companies. Its mission is to contribute to efforts being made towards responsible fishing, creation of employment, foreign exchange earnings, application of food hygiene standards in the fishing industry, poverty reduction and food security by promoting fishing, processing and promoting greater national involvement and providing impetus for change and improvement in the fisheries sub-sector

Community Based Sole Committees (LACOMS): LACOMS is the Community Based Sole Committee and holds exclusive use rights to the fishery and are responsible for its local management. Through its Community Fisheries Center Management Committees, LACOMS has exclusive use rights to the sole fishery within the sole fisheries zone – from the Atlantic shoreline and shorelines adjacent to the estuarine areas of The Gambia River out to nine nautical miles.

Gambia Artisanal Fisheries Development Association (GAMFIDA): GAMFIDA was formed in October 1994 and registered in January 1996 as a Non-Governmental Organization serving as an apex body for the advancement and development of different categories of artisanal fisheries operators in the sub-sector. Twenty member associations are affiliated to GAMFIDA and have four thousand individual members comprising artisanal fishermen, fish processors (smokers & dryers) and fish traders. The NGO's mission is to contribute to efforts being made to ensure food security and poverty alleviation by promoting artisanal fishing, encouraging greater national involvement and providing impetus for change and improvement in the sub-sector.

National Association of Artisanal Fisheries Operators (NAAFO): The National Association of Artisanal Fisheries Operators (NAAFO) is a national organization created and recognized by Government of The Gambia to coordinate the affiliation of Artisanal Fisheries association's country wide. NAAFO was formed in 2004 to better represent and defend the interests of all groups of the artisanal fishery. It has fifty three affiliated associations and an individual membership base of over 3,000 members comprising Fishermen, fish processors (smoking & drying), Fish traders, Outboard engine mechanics, Oyster harvesters,

Fish un-loaders, fish exporters and boat builders. The structure of the organization included the following full-time and part-time positions: 1) President; 2) Vice-president; 3) Executive Secretary; 4) Assistant Secretary; 5) Treasurer; 6) Assistant Treasurer; 7) Organizer; and 8) Three Advisors. NAAFO is partly funded by the Fisheries Development Fund and the National Assembly budget. The Fisheries Development Fund is managed by the Department of Fisheries and is funded by levies from fishing fines, registration of vessels and other sources. Its mission is to contribute to efforts being made to responsible fishing, poverty reduction and food security by promoting artisanal fishing and promoting greater national involvement and providing impetus for change and improvement in the artisanal fishery sub-sector

National Sole Co-management Committee (NASCOM): NASCOM is the National Sole Co-Management Committee. NASCOM and its associated LACOMs (mentioned earlier), through the Community Fisheries Center Management Committees, are designated as having exclusive use rights to the sole fishery within the sole fisheries zone – from the Atlantic shoreline and shorelines adjacent to the estuarine areas of The Gambia River out to nine nautical miles. Within NASCOM, there is stakeholder representation from NAAFO, GAMFIDA, and TAGFC. Its mission is among the other to contribute to efforts being made towards responsible fishing and co-manage resources, creation of employment, application of food hygiene standards in the fishing industry, poverty reduction and food security by promoting fishing, processing and promoting greater national involvement and providing impetus for change and improvement in the fisheries sub-sector.

TRY Women Oyster Association: TRY is a local women oyster harvesters' producer association. TRY is also a body responsible for coordinating the activities of Oyster fishery operators within the Tanbi wetland complex with affiliation of fifteen Oyster associations. TRY's goal is to give a voice to its members, and make sure that they are equally represented in agreements with the government to ensure improved livelihoods and environmental protection. Its membership consists of 490 middle aged women, mostly widowed and uneducated and the bread winners of their families, and 10 men. The women suffered disproportionately from indebtedness and economic hardships during the closed harvesting season and a difficult and hazardous working environment during the harvesting season. Thus, TRY also facilitates improved processing, quality and hygiene as well as plans to develop supplemental livelihoods for the women harvesters and their families (eg: school, school feeding, etc) during the traditional closed season.

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