

# Senegal

## Role of Women in a Model of Community Management of Fish Resources and Marine Environments, Cayar

This case study highlights the role of women in fisheries and coastal resource management in Cayar, Senegal. This has often been looked at from a post-harvest perspective. The model of fish resources and marine environment management in Cayar is the result of a long process, which draws its source from traditional fishing practices in which women are not just marginal players but active participants.

### **Introduction**

Cayar is a fishing village about 50 kilometres north of Dakar, one of the most important artisanal fishing communities in the country.

### **Cayar, Senegal**

During the last twenty years, especially since the years of drought in the mid eighties and the crisis in the agricultural sector, pressure on marine resources has increased so significantly that fish has become scarce. Particularly the demersal (deep-swimming) fish species and shellfish are considered over-exploited. The pelagic (shoal-swimming) species in surface waters are fully exploited in most fishing areas. The problem is exacerbated by fleets from northern countries which, after over-fishing their own waters, have moved to West Africa, where fishing is largely unregulated and interfere with coastal fleets of mostly traditional small canoes, thus rapidly increasing the total fishing pressure. In total some 400.000 tonnes of fish are caught annually in the Senegalese Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Fishing is currently the most important economic sector of the country.

- The sector employs about 15 percent of the Senegalese working population (600.000 people).
- Fresh fish and fish products are Senegal's most important export product to Europe, Asia and neighbouring countries, with total annual revenues of about 300 millions Euros which account for about 30 percent of total exports.
- The Senegalese government draws revenue from granting access to European and Asian industrial fishing vessels to the Senegalese "Exclusive Economic Zone" (EEZ).
- 5 percent of animal proteins consumed by the Senegalese are derived from fish and fish products.

Women play a crucial role in fisheries. Their main activities are:

- Processing of fish products, and associated work such as collecting freshwater and fuel wood.
- Trade. Women are extensively involved in the buying and selling of fish products, through local markets, restaurants or other outlets.

The problems in the fisheries sector relate, therefore, not simply to conservation and biodiversity issues, but are closely linked to social, economic and political interests from the local to the national level.

### **Women fish processors**

The first major initiative of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Western Africa office was their *YAKAR* Project ('hope' in the local Wolof language). "*Yakar, Community Management of Marine Resources and the Environment in Cayar*", outlined a plan of action to help to solve the fisheries problems in the area. The objectives of the project were the conservation of fishery resources, the reduction of poverty among the fishermen, and the improvement of hygiene of marine products.

The YAKAR project started its activities in 2003. However, it was more focused on conservation issues and did not take into consideration other issues. There was a need to better take into account the linkage between natural livelihood resources and poverty alleviation.

This is when the *programme “Safeguarding Natural Marine Resources for Coastal Communities”* was initiated. This Programme is part of the larger programme on Natural Livelihood Resources and Poverty Alleviation initiated by WWF, the IUCN Netherlands Committee and Friend of the Earth. It began in January 2004 for a three-year period. The overall objective is “to contribute significantly and demonstrably to the well-being of natural marine resources and of the people that are directly dependent on those resources”.

In the Programme three "modules" were developed with poverty reduction as the central issue. These were on: direct poverty alleviation of small-scale fishermen in coastal fishing communities; the creation of market opportunities for coastal fisheries through, among other means, local regulation in order to create stability of supply and higher prices and incomes of fishermen; and on strengthening the collaboration and exchange of civil society organisations in order to build capacity towards improved performance of fisheries.

The most important activities developing linkages between biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation are:

- The micro-finance programme which started in March 2004 with the development of a “Mutuelle d’Epargne et Credit”, which was operational about 6 months afterwards (October 2004). This activity was funded by the Programme on Natural Livelihood Resources and Poverty Alleviation
- The process of establishing marine protected area in Cayar through a participatory process including all stakeholders, mainly artisanal fishers and the women who preserve and sell fish.

### **Importance of the Issue**

Knowledge of how people interact with each other and with their environment is a necessary component of effective resource policy. Policymaking, including for marine protected areas (MPAs), appears to be most informed and innovative when it is open to the views and experiences of all stakeholders. However, despite their involvement in the use of coastal and marine resources around the world, many women face barriers to participating fully in the planning and management of those resources. Such barriers can be institutional, educational, or cultural in nature, and can profoundly influence decision - making that affects the welfare of marine resources and coastal communities. This case study highlights the attempt to fully involve women in fisheries and coastal resource management in Cayar, Senegal.

### **The Case**

#### **Participation of Women in the Establishment of the Marine Protected Areas**

In most countries, women are not involved or even overlooked in the planning, development or management of marine and coastal resources. Fortunately, the process of establishing an MPA in Cayar recognises gender and the participation of women in development processes as central for sustainable development.

Due to their different roles, MPAs affect women and men differently whether or not they are consulted or involved, and both men and women inevitably have an impact on MPA implementation and management. Recognition of gender differences and their integration into MPA planning increases the

chance of both women and men participating in and benefiting from an MPA, which in turn contributes to its success.

### **Women as MPA Stakeholders**

When planners consult only men in resource management, they're consulting only half the population. Due to this, they miss half the information. In the case of Cayar, at the onset, women with the men in the community have both been involved in the participatory process of establishing the MPA. Women's participation is not only seen in their numbers. Women frequently know more about certain aspects of the resources, because they often occupy different spaces in the landscape. For this reason, they were able to bring the "broader picture" and not just focus exclusively on men's needs and priorities.

The different women associations ("*Groupements de Promotion Feminine*", fish processing associations, coastal clean up committees, etc.) played a very important role. In line with this, the quality of women's participations can also be observed by their being elected in different key positions within the different committee and local co-management bodies.

The economic situation of the fishermen in Cayar seems to have improved. Due to better management, the size of fish is increasing along with the prices. The fishermen and fish processors (women) perceive the trainings received on how to add value to the products as very helpful. Although not all problems with co-management are solved, fishermen and women organisations feel empowered and are well aware of the quality of their management system.

### **Setting-up Micro-finance for Women**

Reducing unsustainable pressures on marine and coastal resources is one tool for protecting biodiversity. But when the pressures come from subsistence or artisanal fishers, the situation becomes more complex since people's livelihoods are at stake. One technique is to encourage fishers to adopt more environmentally friendly gear and another is to help them and their families to switch from fishing to other employment. These are not necessarily expensive undertakings but they do take some money and small scale fishers rarely have access to capital. This is why WWF has become active in helping to establish gender-sensitive community based micro-finance systems. Experiences to date in Cayar have been extremely positive. The credit unions provide more than just money. They empower. Credit unions are one tool for reducing poverty and encouraging better environmental management. In Cayar, for example, women have used micro-credit funds to start vegetable farming, livestock, shop keeping, and to add value to fish products by initiating their own wholesale fish businesses instead of selling to "middlemen". Since the start of operations in 2004, 206 small loans have been granted. The fund was initially established with a loan from WWF of about 15,000 euros and a counterpart savings fund of the members of about 7,500. Currently, the credit union has generated more than 9,000 euros in interest payments and has reimbursed WWF nearly 4,000 euros. It is expected that all the funds given by WWF will be reimbursed by October 2007 by which time the credit union will be entirely self-sufficient.

Membership in the credit unions is limited to community members and since interpersonal and familial ties in rural communities are very close, social pressures ensure that monies are properly lent and repaid. To date, no loan has been unpaid and only about 9% of the loans are being repaid more slowly than expected.

The main borrowing and lending rules are set by the Senegalese Central Bank but local communities can set additional regulations (e.g. what activities are eligible). A community council, made up of the

members, and a General Assembly meet periodically. Every credit union must have agreed operational principles, developed by the communities, which clearly articulates how funds should be used and by whom. In Cayar, the community has decided only to permit loans that promote activities which are respectful of the environment, reduce poverty, and promote development.

Establishing and managing a credit union takes specific skills so WWF helps to organize communities and facilitates training of credit union employees. They are also involved with periodic audits to ensure that the facilities are operated within government standards and according to rules set by the communities.

Micro-credit programmes are potentially powerful tools to help communities, mainly women, near marine protected areas to expand and diversify their local economies. In addition to providing public awareness and technical support, the current proposal plans for several exchange visits between communities interested in establishing credit unions and those already operational. This will allow for fishers and their families who have had experiences in their own communities to work with people from others. This is a particularly powerful magnification tool as no one is more capable of explaining the systems to fishers than other fishers.

### **Results/Lesson Learnt**

#### **What worked and why?**

A demand driven approach: Given the absence of alternative employment opportunities the Cayar fishermen are almost entirely dependent in their livelihoods from artisanal fisheries. The restitution and maintenance of this resource base is, therefore, the precondition for barring a further deterioration of their situation. In fact, it was the fishermen in Cayar themselves who started to establish sustainable fishing practices more than a decade ago in the wake of the monetary crisis in 1994. The approach of WWF was to define, in collaboration with the communities, what needs to be done and to consult the population in order to ensure that the interventions remain close to the needs of the community. The setting-up of a micro-credit system was one of the explicit demands of the village people. The women also expressed the need the construction of news ovens for fish processing and also the need to be trained on financial management (accounting, budgeting). WWF activities were geared to support the communities in the solution of problems that are still outside their reach.

In Cayar today the local fishery organisations are well organised. Cayar is the only fishing village in Senegal with community management. Often the organisations have an economic component, as in the numerous *Groupements d'Interêt Economique* (GIE) and women have a important stake. These play an important role in representing the fishermen at the governmental "Service de Pêche", the local branch of the Fisheries Department. In some villages there are inter-professional committees with representatives of each of these groups, which administer the jetty. Their quality and power vary significantly from one fishing community to another.

Right from the start in 2000, WWF was conscious of the close links between the exploitation of marine resources by fishermen and poverty reduction on the one hand, and the danger of over-exploitation and the difficulties of an exclusively conservationist approach on the other. The WWF intervention in Cayar developed and employed diverse and an overlapping strategy to influence traditional practices within the fishers community and address the gap between conservation and development needs of men and women in the community. The most immediate effects for livelihoods come probably from the support to the maintenance of the management rules in artisanal fisheries, the construction of ovens for fish processing by the women, and the establishment of a cooperative credit scheme the funds of which are used in both the fisheries sector (boats, outboard motors, gear) and outside of it (horticulture,

commerce). Participation of the communities in the preparation and implementation of management plans, as supported by the project, is decisive for ownership of the measures and compliance. The women play an instrumental role in both the organizational planning and implementation of activities.

### **What did not work and why?**

The Senegalese government views the Cayar model as an example for the rest of Senegal and beyond. However, for its extension it is indispensable that the respective communities and their organisations are given the legal status to allow them to enforce compliance with their management plans vis-a vis migrant fishermen and deviant community members. The provision of such legal instruments to Cayar is the main explanation of the seemingly mysterious fact that of all Senegalese fishing communities which have all more or less the same problem context and the same socio-cultural traditions, only this single community succeeded in turning the situation around.

In many instances, women's participation is limited to project activities (e.g. training and seminars, livelihood project development, participation in advocacy and lobbying efforts, etc?). From the result of their participation, there may be opportunities in pursuing gender equity issues (e.g. access to resources, access to factors of production (raw material, additional capital, market access) that still need to be pursued and developed. In this context it will be interesting to look into how women are able to participate in benefits distribution, decision making processes and resource management that ensure sustainable use, conservation/rehabilitation, and equitable benefits for men and women in the community.

### **Key points for sharing of knowledge and replicability**

Learn about the gender structure of local communities and find out why women often cannot participate as much as men; address this by asking both women and men for solutions; proceed gradually and gain the support of men as well.

- Use the knowledge of women about biodiversity, as they interact differently with the marine environment than men (e.g. their role in post-harvest activities such as gutting fish, may give them greater knowledge about fish reproductive seasons).
- Ensure equitable participation in all activities, including training, of both stakeholders and staff (recognising that participation should never be mandatory). This may mean scheduling meetings that suit women (e.g. not at traditional male meeting places).
- Use participatory methods, such as single sex focus groups and separate meetings with men and women.
- Monitor how women and men participate in and benefit from coastal resource management.
- Keep sex-disaggregated data on all employment, training, enterprise group loans, and meetings, in order to determine trends in proportions of budgets spent on and participation of both genders.
- Create 'role-models' and encourage leadership and responsibility in promoting gender equality.

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