

Outline of our case study for developing an Academy of Small-scale Fisheries in Senegal

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The proposed case study is premised on creating test beds for the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Ensuring Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication and the wider framework of SDG 14 and associated goals. It is grounded in field work we conducted in 2014/15 about perceptions and aspirations of small-scale fishers about the on-going attempts at sector policy reform in Senegal supported by the World Bank and other donors and encountering significant difficulties. We further build on recent work of the Sea Around Us Project on catch reconstructions by subsector, assessments of the effectiveness of MCS and documentation of declining profitability particularly in the massively expanded small-scale fleet segments combined with own field observations. We also rely on earlier work on the development of teaching aids about the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries, conducted for and with FAO since 2011. These teaching aids and work books for pupils are being disseminated by us also among leaders of fishing communities and meet with great interest as serial overfishing and new demands for "non-traditional" species from Asian markets lead to novelties in catches and trigger curiosity about what's going on in the ecosystem that can not be grasped with existing local knowledge.

The case study responds to demand already expressed by the fishers during interviews and focus groups where key concerns in relation to research were

- learning more about ecosystems, how they are composed, function and change and why and how this is concerns us all
- have more research conducted about the structure and dynamics of fishing communities, not only about the fish (and teasing out opportunities for improved well-being that makes research worthwhile for them, as is the case more readily in agricultural research)
- get better access to research results in formats that are suitable for their level of formal education and language skills
- being more involved in research themselves, have a space and means to share and refine their indigenous knowledge in research and decision making to facilitate transitions towards sustainability
- being recognised as legitimate stakeholders in management processes – they successfully stymied many government attempts at control, but do say they recognise the need for limitations, but don't accept top down decisions taken without a proper hearing and involvement of their representatives.

The concept of the Academy of Small-scale Fisheries has several components, likely to

evolve further during implementation. Core elements are

- an agora – a safe space for respectful dialogue (using art of hosting technologies)
- preparation of pedagogical aids that break down key scientific results into info sheets, posters, videos, possibly role plays (theatre is a strong cultural element), fish rulers with biological minimum sizes of major exploited species etc.
- participatory research with fishers and women in fish processing and marketing about their economic and social conditions (accompany a small sample of women for 48h in their daily chores....)
- workshops about links between macro- and micro-trends in the fishery and market access to explore opportunities vs. current
- a space for students, both local and foreign, to do field work for their theses
- celebration of local culture open to the world
- support to local leadership for effectively participating in various processes
- IUU fishing, MCS, and where to go from here
- reducing school drop outs in fishing villages to open more opportunities in- and outside the fisheries.
- Ultimately, become a resource centre for life-long learning and exploration.

We believe that this is a timely initiative with good potential for learning of all sides, incl. various administrations, which would not take the risk or could simply not initiate something like this within their constraints. The emphasis on “academy” and a free space for exchange and learning is important to get out of the current stalemate between small-scale fishers and officialdom, or worse, decline of all sorts of authority.

The academy concept would be developed in close cooperation with the major professional organisations, such as Collectif National des Pêcheurs artisans du Sénégal (CNPS), National Federation of Groups of Economic Interest in Fisheries (FENAGIE – Pêche) and be open to participation as resource persons, discussants etc. of scientists, fisheries administrators, civil society representatives etc. At least initially, fancy venues will be avoided and low-cost approaches are important to build the trust and credibility for such a platform to serve its purpose (No meetings in fancy hotels that abound in Senegal, which rarely, if ever, reach out to the ones purported to be served).