

Fishing for the Future

A World Bank-funded project for 12 countries in the East African and Indian Ocean regions attempts to allow fishers to maximize revenue but not deplete stocks

Q : Good morning. Could you tell us about the SWIOFish1 project and how it would help fishers and coastal communities in your region?

A: Thank you for giving me this opportunity to interact on this SWIOFish1 project. This is a World Bank-funded project destined for 12 countries in the East African and Indian Ocean regions (with the exception of Yemen and Somalia). These countries are part of the South West Indian Ocean (SWIO) Fisheries Commission. There was an outgoing World Bank initiative called the South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Project – the SWIOFP project – which was phased out. The countries belonging to the SWIOFP area made a plea to the World Bank to ensure sustainability of the project. That was how this new project came

now becoming the fundamental paradigm, fishers are at the core of development efforts.

The regional project sets out minimum terms and conditions for all foreign fishing vessels who take licences from the respective countries to fish in their national EEZs and the high seas. The conditions must be uniform for the region. The maximum potential catch in each country's waters will determine the financial contribution which the countries will pay besides the licence fees. We want to harmonise the licence fees across the board per tonnage and not on stock size or potential. The countries are toying with the idea of a common front in terms of setting up a South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Framework Agreement.

Q: How are these agreements different in impact from the EU-Mauritania Agreement, for example, in terms of local development?

A: The fisheries framework agreement which those countries want to put in place will be an entity that will negotiate on their behalf, as in the case of the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (PFFA). The situation, however, is different. In the Pacific, 90 per cent of the catch is from the EEZ and 10 per cent from the high seas, whereas in the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) area, where these 12 countries operate, the distribution is 50-60 per cent from the EEZ and around 40-50 per cent from the high seas. So a configuration is being built up to have a centralized unit to negotiate with the distant-water fleet to fish in their EEZs.

In the present fisheries partnership agreement, there are plenty of infrastructure elements in place as a result of the fisheries sector support policy. The new agreement will allow these countries to negotiate with the

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into operation in 2015. It is called the First South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Governance and Shared Growth Project.

This is a very diverse region where most of the fishers – operating very close to the shore – earn their living from the exploitation of marine resources up to 12 nautical miles from the shoreline, and beyond. But these traditional communities are among the poorest in each country of the region. You also have the five Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) island states which command a large exclusive economic zone (EEZ). With the Blue Economy

This interview with Daroomalingum Mauree (d.mauree@coi-ioc.org), Regional Project Co-ordinator, SWIOFish1, Commission of the Indian Ocean, Mauritius, was conducted by N Venugopalan and Manas Roshan of ICSF (icsf@icsf.net). The interview took place on the sidelines of the Second Regional Workshop on Monitoring, Control and Surveillance, organized by the Bay of Bengal Programme, Inter-Governmental Organisation in Chennai during 3 - 4 October 2018. The transcript was prepared by Mythili D. K. (mythilidk@arm-c.com)

European Union (EU) for licences, which binds them to ensure transparency and monitoring. The project has also got a relationship with IOTC which meets annually, where the countries are exposed to a series of proposals tabled by individual member countries.

We have been working on a commonality of interest and ideas before putting up proposals at the IOTC meeting to ensure that the project works in the interests and needs of the region and its industry and the fisher community. There are several mechanisms already in place – the South African Development Community (SADC), the Indian Ocean Commission, the IOTC, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Eastern and Southern African Economic Partnership Agreement. We try to avoid duplication of projects and wastage of resources. We will soon set up a regional monitoring control surveillance co-operation centre in Mozambique to which all the countries will be invited to participate.

Tracking down and fighting illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is important in exporting your products. The issue of subsidies is also very important. Each country under the SWIOFC umbrella is entitled to take either a loan or a grant from the World Bank. Only two countries – Mauritius and Seychelles – have to repay the loan because of their gross domestic product (GDP) levels, unlike, say, the Comoros, Tanzania, Madagascar, Mozambique and Maldives.

The countries of the region are bound to integrate the needs of the fisher community into the spheres of development and at the same time, increase the participation of women in fisheries. They also need to train their fisher community in new fishing techniques. The project will also seek to enhance proper recording of statistical data using electronic media like mobile phones.

Q: How does this project synergise with the projects on the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication (the SSF Guidelines) happening in the same countries?

A: All projects that are being implemented at the national level – whether it is boatbuilding, security-at-sea measures, gear development, preservation of fish products, avoiding wastage, and developing landing infrastructure – must indirectly have a relationship and correlation with the SSF Guidelines. And they are approved only after widespread discussion and gap analyses.

Let me give you a concrete example now. In Mauritius, we have an island called Rodrigues. It's a dependency of Mauritius. This island witnessed massive destruction and overfishing of the octopus fishery, leading to the closure of the fishery. Management measures were put in place and fishing effort diverted to other alternative job opportunities. And finally, after a two-year closure, the stocks were rehabilitated. And now Zanzibar is following suit through the network.

A similar project is taking place in Madagascar, which has a very long coastline that makes it difficult

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to regulate fisheries management measures. The ongoing project attempts to mark boats in the crab fishery. The boat marking now will form the basis of identification and a starting point to determine the level of fishing effort. Thus, every project is tailored to the needs and requirements of each country.

In the case of the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing at the regional and national levels, with the introduction of monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) measures and vessel monitoring system (VMS), there is better policing of the waters. We should not think that only the distant-water fishing fleets and the big fleets are playing havoc in our waters. With improved technology and techniques, local vessels are also involved in IUU fishing. Through the

MCS network, we can now track the movements of all the licensed vessels and cross-check them against the database of the monitoring centre.

Q: Once the external assistance of SWIOFish1 project gets over, what about the local capabilities of these governments to develop a national legislation and policies which support the development of the local fishing communities as well as coming together for developing action plans at the regional level?

A: Within the national programme, SWIOFish will try to assist all countries to improve upon their national legislation for fisheries. Any country having problems to adhere to the 1995 Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries will be given the opportunity to contract out a consultant to come to their country and assist them. When SWIOFish1 ends in September 2021, SWIOFish2 is waiting on the sidelines. SWIOFish2 will give the fishers an

project of the Swedish Development International Agency (SIDA). We are presently also working on a SWIOFC–Nairobi Convention joint probe document, particularly targeted at artisanal fishers.

Q: For all the 12 countries?

A: For all the 12 countries, yes. We want to understand what are likely to be the impacts of the fisheries management measures on shrimp, crab and demersal fisheries, as well as their impacts on the marine ecosystem in terms of overexploitation, climate change, and pollution. In the Cotonou Agreement with the EU, all the African, Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) countries will benefit from financial assistance for the development of their respective sectors. Aid will also come from the European Development Fund, which can be used for MCS activities.

Q: How is the revenue obtained from distant-water fishing nations for accessing your EEZ used?

A: These fees are paid into the treasury of the Ministry of Fisheries and directed into the central treasury of each country. The fisheries partnership agreements have two elements – one is the fisheries sector support policy, the other is the financial contribution of the EU. Besides that, is the fishing licence fee, which goes directly into the treasury. The fisheries support sector policy element goes to the central treasury but must be credited into the account of the Ministry of Fisheries for implementation of the project.

Q: Your project is focusing on governance, trade and MCS and you have done some support work in the crab fishery of Madagascar and in the sea cucumber fishery of Seychelles. How is the project trying to help the local fishing communities?

A: The sea cucumber fishery is a very high-value fishery for the markets of China, South Korea and Japan. But there has been an overexploitation of stocks. The fishers communities, especially in Seychelles, have grouped together into an organization to ensure the manageability of sea cucumber stocks at a sustainable level. Limits have been imposed on the fishing season and the number of dives to extract the sea cucumber. Initially, there was a lot of

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opportunity to attend international meetings, meet with the fishers community, articulate the voices of the fishers at inter-sessional discussions so that the project meets their needs.

Eight countries will benefit from SWIOFish2. They are all island states, namely, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritius, Seychelles, Comoros and Madagascar, which will bear the brunt of climate change and erosion – all small islands. We have to make the member countries realize that they cannot depend eternally on foreign technical assistance. There is a need to create a trust fund to show their commitment, a fund that will drive the process of sustainable development of their fisheries.

There is a great possibility that funds will come from the Dr. Fridtjof Nansen Programme to sustain the research work that is needed for all the 12 countries. There is an ongoing


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Event calendar

10 to 11 December
conference on the preservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, Mauritius

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Steering Committee of Biodiversity program, Mauritius

Présentation de la COI

What we are driving at through the SWIOFish project is that these fisheries must only be developed at a sustainable level, and they must be controlled to allow fishers to maximize revenue but not deplete the stocks

resistance to the strategy to cut down the fishing effort. But now, through training and discussions, the stocks are recovering.

Take the octopus fishery of Rodrigues. Whenever there is a closed season, the Rodriguan administration tries to give the fishers alternative jobs – like cleaning backyards and streets, scavenging work, or any other paid work. The seasonal closure helps reduce undue pressure on the stock and allows for recovery. The result – fatter octopus at the end of the closure.

What we are driving at through the SWIOFish project is that these fisheries must only be developed at a sustainable level, and they must be controlled to allow fishers to maximize revenue but not deplete the stocks. Most of the project has got this synergy. In Mauritius there is a limited entry in place identical to a quota allocation mechanism whereby those who cannot use their quota during a given year can have them redistributed to performing vessels to satisfy market requirements.

Q: Could you say something more about the structure of how the quota is distributed among the communities?

A: For the artisanal fishery, at this point in time, it is an open-access fishery. So there's no quota. The sea cucumber fishery in Seychelles and Mauritius is a very controlled fishery, with quotas allocated based on research of the stock potential, in an honest, fair

and reasonable manner. If this supply is interrupted, then we have to import fish. And we are importing a lot from India and the Far East because we don't have enough fish in Mauritius.

Q: And the Mauritian octopus fishery has almost come back to sustainable resource levels?

A: Yes, for Rodrigues it has come to the sustainable level. But not for Mauritius, which includes Rodrigues. 🐙

For more

<http://www.swiofishnz.go.tz/index.php>
SWIOFISH

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YwcEti6fVxQ&feature=youtu.be-->

Film: Fisheries and Aquaculture in the SWIO Region: Best Practices and Lessons Learned