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**What Does the Future Hold for
Malagasy Coastal Communities?**

The Role of Traditional Fisheries

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Abstract

Traditional fisheries in Madagascar provide the main source of livelihood for over 100,000 fishermen from 1250 communities along 5,000 kms of coast. The fishery provides 50% of the Malagasy fish catch and supplies 70% of the fish locally consumed. Despite this, the sector is not recognised officially, and is marginalised from mainstream national economic development. Since 1995 a group of Malagasy NGOs, supported by European NGOs, have been drawing public attention – both locally and internationally – to this situation. Over the last 6 years they have carried out a number of programmes both locally and internationally. These have involved studying and documenting the traditional sector, organising formal meetings between representatives from traditional fishing communities and policy makers, and lobbying the Malagasy Government and European Union Member States to include traditional fisheries in their development initiatives.

Introduction

It is undeniable that Madagascar, a large island of 587,000 sq km and a population of around 14 million people, is a maritime power. It possesses a coastline of 5,000 kms, and a 200-mile EEZ, despite legal disputes with France over the sovereignty of three islands scattered in the Mozambique Channel. The national maritime outlook is very bleak: the port infrastructure is in a state of abandonment; Malagasy shipping companies are disappearing to the benefit of the insurers of foreign fleets. Faced with modernization and globalization, in a few years, Malagasy ports are at risk of falling into marginal use in the southwest region of the Indian Ocean, where, up to the 1960s, they held third place.

By contrast, Malagasies see the industrial fisheries sector as the new “El Dorado”. Malagasy fishery resources, unevaluated but with real potential, are coveted by industrial companies. For the most part, these are Malagasy-registered, but foreign-owned, employing mainly expatriate staff. The growing value of shrimp, described as pink gold, is reflected by the willingness of the government to categorise it as a strategic resource of national importance.

Faced with an expanding shrimp fishery and with all kinds of demands from the industrial sector, traditional fisheries, time bound and never benefiting from any technical development, are relegated to second place. This sector is in danger of disappearing; leaving destitute the fishing population in the 1,250 officially registered villages, in places where agriculture is not possible. It could even be said that the sector is a hostage to ignorance, unknown in the mainstream economic development of the fishery. What hope is there for the future?

Gaining Organizational Momentum

Modelled on French law, Malagasy law encourages associations to become formalised. Since its independence in 1960, several kinds of organizations have sprung up and multiplied, including: Associations, Unions, Co-operatives, and Non-Government Organizations.

In the maritime sector, organizations were first initiated towards the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s. The country's isolation was not seen as a constraint, and it was felt that there was little to worry about in the maritime sector. At around this time, thanks to initiatives of the Apostolate of the Sea, little by little, an organizational movement in the maritime sector was developed in its all its multiplicity and diversity. During this process, it was seen fit to regroup these efforts into a national level platform. Thus the Madagascar Marine Programme (PMM) was born, but, now living on borrowed time and facing a complex situation, it is being used to hoodwink the unsuspecting. Towards the end of 1999, and due to an urgent need to monitor and co-ordinate ongoing initiatives in the Malagasy maritime sector, the Collective of Malagasy Maritime Organizations (COMM) came into being. This initiative was taken by people close to the Apostolate of the Sea and the PMM.

Such a monitoring and co-ordination was deemed necessary because both in the merchant marine sector and in the fisheries sector, thanks to support from foreign

partners, several initiatives were being taken country wide around the coasts. These initiatives count on the strong support of the seafarers and fishworkers to establish common objectives that will enable “national solidarity” to be promoted, and, over time, should develop into a Malagasy Maritime Sector.

At this point, a brief summary of the story so far to clarify the roles played by the respective organizations would be useful:

The Apostolate of the Sea is a branch of the Roman Catholic Church with its headquarters in Rome. It works for the well-being of seafarers. It has established itself in the main coastal centres of Madagascar, and its various initiatives have led to the creation of organizational movements and platforms for the representatives of various segments of the merchant marine and fisheries sectors. In 1993, in partnership with the French NGO CCFD (the Catholic Committee for Freedom from Hunger and Development), various Malagasy organizations from the traditional and artisanal fisheries sectors formed a national level grouping called FECPAMA (Christian Federation of Artisanal Fishermen of Madagascar). Likewise, organizations of seafarers from the merchant marine sector formed another national level body called FECMAMA (Christian Federation of Malagasy Seafarers).

Another initiative was taken in January 1995 to improve the focus and co-ordination of efforts supporting the maritime sector. Also in partnership with CCFD, this gave birth to the Malagasy Maritime Programme (PMM), providing a new national level platform and a voice for all the groups maritime sector federations. At the beginning of 1998, the scope of the EU-Madagascar Tuna Fisheries Agreement was considerably widened. During the negotiations for the renewal of this agreement, a number of joint initiatives were taken by CCFD and CFFA (Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements) in support of various local level actions in Madagascar. These included awareness raising and campaigning in fishworker communities, facilitated and conducted by the different networks associated with the Apostolate of the Sea and FECPAMA.

It was also during this time that a “Workshop on the Future of Traditional Fisheries in Madagascar” was organized to provide a voice to the fishworkers themselves. Unfortunately, after the initiative was launched, PMM were unable to see through their commitments due to administrative problems. Thanks to the joint efforts of local organizations with their foreign partners (CCFD and CFFA), the workshop took place, and led to the formation of COMM (the Collective of Malagasy Maritime Organizations).

COMM is a new national level institution, comprising 28 associations or groupings of seafarers and fishworkers dispersed across the large island. As its name implies, COMM is a genuine collective, directed by a Maritime Council that represents its constituents. It has the following long-term objectives:

- to raise public awareness about conditions in the maritime sector;
- to encourage associations and groupings of seafarers to know about their rights and to take up their responsibilities;

- to establish a shared communication to foster improved understanding of the needs expressed by the maritime profession, thereby enabling them to participate fully in the development of their sector.
- to foster support for associations and groupings of seafarers, industrial fishery workers, traditional fishworkers and coastal communities, and eventually dockers and the families of seafarers.

COMM's purpose is to represent and promote, to train and inform, and to support and encourage working relations between organizations supporting workers in the merchant marine and fishery sectors.

COMM's assistance is available to all the bodies working to promote the maritime sector, regardless of race, religion, or political persuasion. Such a collective effort is necessary in the context of "globalization", and, given the realities we face, to succeed together, we must act together.

Of course, there is a strong connection between those with power and the means for enabling those without power to advance. But COMM's objectives are rooted in the development priorities of the seafarers at both local and national levels, taking into account changes at international level, and the hazards of globalization and its consequences.

To this end, concrete actions, particularly in the area of traditional fisheries, are being undertaken and which have enabled some breakthroughs to be made in raising awareness at the national level.

The First Steps Along the Road

The start of fishery agreement negotiations between the European Union (EU) and Madagascar towards signing a new protocol is what first triggered the Malagasy traditional fishing sector to voice its concerns and to make itself heard.

In 1995, the first phase in the wide-scale mobilisation of traditional fishworkers was undertaken in the framework of the renewal of the fourth tuna agreement between the EU and Madagascar. In the various discussions, organized both in the coastal provinces and in the Malagasy capital, two important issues were taken up as core themes:

First of all, the fishworkers' image of the fishery resources is one where big fish feed on small fry. But they also know that a mass of small fish can swallow up the big fry.

Secondly, they established the following position: "We feel that the country should be developed by Malagasies, for Malagasies... But that won't be achieved in a day! But shall we make a start? Aren't our officials essentially economic managers of the resource, leaving the human resources idle, to be exploited by foreigners?" Recognizing this was the call that awoke the Malagasy traditional sector.

As noted above, mobilization on this wide scale was facilitated through improvements in the organizational environment and structure and thanks to the support provided by a number of the aforementioned organizations. A synergy was thus created between national Malagasy organizations and foreign partners. From then on, it became easier to move things forward together, focusing on precise objectives.

In 1998, a joint mission of the Brussels-based CFFA and the French NGO, CCFD focused on the need for the traditional Malagasy fishing sector to be recognized. The first signs of this were noticed in the context of the fisheries agreement due to be signed by the two parties. Thus, it is worth noting that, for the first time, the fifth EU-Madagascar Tuna Fisheries Agreement (approved in Brussels on 8 June 1998) stipulated that part of the financial compensation of the agreement amounting to 125,000 ECU (some 750 million Malagasy francs) was to be allocated to the development of traditional fisheries. It was also noted that unless a workshop was organized to consult with the fishworkers themselves, it would be almost impossible to decide what this should be used for.

In 1999, a workshop for fishworkers was organized in Amborovy-Majunga (17 to 22 May) on “What Does the Future Hold for Traditional Malagasy Fisheries?”. Specialists from the Malagasy Ministry of Fisheries and Fishery Resources participated in this workshop. A “Fishworkers’ Statement” supported by “Recommendations” with 20 fundamental points were produced. These covered four main areas:

1. Materials and ownership of vessels;
2. Production, processing and preservation;
3. Trade and markets; and
4. The role of women – collection and marketing.

Up to this stage, as mentioned above, it had always been the PMM that had guided the processes.

In 2000, at an important first meeting of fishworkers in Majunga, COMM, in partnership with CFFA, CCFD and ICSF, took up the initiative by organizing a debate on the “Problematic of the Zone Reserved for Small-scale Fishing”. A meeting was then organized in Toamasina (25 to 28 August), attended by specialists from the Malagasy Ministry of Fisheries and Fishery Resources. The fishworker representatives validated the results of a survey carried out in nine sites selected as representative of their sector. The event enabled them to confirm that “traditional Malagasy fisheries are alive and well, but they are fragile and vulnerable”.

The meeting focused on these main questions:

- How to define the sector? Who is considered a traditional fisherman? What criteria are recognized by the fishermen themselves to qualify to be a traditional fisherman?

The majority of fishworkers interviewed came from fishing families, where fishing was their main source of livelihood. The use of special fishing gear, observance of family traditions, restrictions and taboos were also seen as important and common elements.

The sector was also seen as highly vulnerable:

- traditional fishing gear and boats are vulnerable to bad weather, and collisions (especially with industrial fishing boats);
 - traditional fishing communities are vulnerable and at risk in the face of competition from other activities (industrial aquaculture, different types of pollution in the coastal area);
 - the fishery resources on which traditional fishermen depend are highly vulnerable to overexploitation of the coastal areas. This could put the very survival of families and communities living along the coast at risk.
- How to get the sector formally recognized by the public authorities (representation at national level, actions by public authorities—census, taxation, subsidies, etc.)

Lack of official recognition of traditional fisheries by the administrative and political authorities was seen as a major constraint. However, representatives of national authorities present did acknowledge that “traditional fisheries exist”, that they “help earn foreign exchange for the country”, and that “they play an important role in the fight against poverty and supply of fish for national consumption”.

- How to manage access to the coastal area, with the traditional fisheries as a sector having priority access.

Fishworkers wanted their rights of access to be recognized and protected. They also wanted to be involved in the management of their coastal zones and the resources it contained, in order to ensure sustainability of stocks, to fight against coastal pollution, etc.

In the same year, “Representatives of Malagasy Fishworkers” participated in the World Forum meeting, held in Loctudy France. This enabled COMM to become a member of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP). At the same time, there was a European campaign on shrimp fishing in Madagascar initiated by the NGO “AGIR ICI”, with other French and European partners.

Now, in a context where the French government and the shrimp fisheries dominate the Malagasy fisheries scene, the road seems long and bleak. At a time when they are trying to establish a national level platform to defend their interests and help develop their capabilities to participate in resource management and decision-making processes, traditional fishworkers are facing a highly confusing and hugely

competitive situation. Two important fisheries management programmes are being taken up at the national level:

- First of all, within the framework of the national Environmental Programme, the Malagasy State has established a “Ministry for the Environment”. Its first operational programmes are the “Protected Areas and Zones” implemented by ANGP (National Organization for the Management of Protected Areas) branch of the National Environmental Office (ONE), and funded by the World Bank and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). It is worth noting that this programme owes much of its effectiveness to the policy approach adopted, specifically within the framework of building up the responsibility of grass roots communities based on traditional norms. Within the same Ministry, the Marine and Coastal Branch (EMC) is taking an active part in this programme by encouraging coastal communities to become involved in an integrated coastal zone management programme (GIZC). This programme has established the GELOSE (Locally Secured Management) framework that provides fishing communities with the rights to manage and control the different activities being undertaken in their respective areas.
- By contrast, for the industrial fisheries, a programme to establish “Concrete Zonal Management” (ZAC) has been initiated. This is supported by the French Agency for Development (AFD) and financed by French public funds. It is being implemented through the French commercial interests party to the GAPCM, a grouping of Malagasy shrimp industry organizations, and is supposed to provide a tool to resolve resource allocation problems as well as all kinds of conflicts within the fisheries. This five-year programme is both supported and backed by the Malagasy Ministry of Fisheries and Fisheries Resources. As a result of being part of the aid being pushed by French public funds, the ZAC project and the associated programme have come to dominate the fisheries management debate in Madagascar. Through this programme, the GAPCM would like to see small-scale fisheries develop as a service providing sub-sector of the shrimp industry.
- Within the same programme, in December, a workshop on the Management of Shrimp Fisheries in Madagascar was organized at the ministerial level. In reality, it was the GAPCM (changing their name from the Organization of Malagasy Shrimp Fishery Vessel Owners to the Organization of Malagasy Shrimp Fishers and Vessel Owners) who were behind this meeting. COMM, represented by its Executive Secretary, was honoured to give a presentation entitled “The Problematic of the Zone Reserved for Small-scale Fishing”. The issue of traditional fisheries was at the centre of the workshop debates, and has now become an issue of concern.

In 2001, there is recognition that the traditional fishing sector may be a global concern; but it also requires an administrative basis. There should, therefore, be an open exchange between administrators and fishworkers. A roundtable meeting of fishworkers was therefore organized in Tananarive (14 to 17 March) to discuss the the issues of “Traditional Fisheries and Food Security, Sustainable Development, and Poverty Alleviation”.

What more is there to say on this occasion when the coastal States of the Indian Ocean are meeting to discuss their future? Specifically, in the case of Madagascar, one can say that, with each step taken, further important issues become apparent.

We hope, in the course of time, we will identify what effective actions need to be taken in the future to make the maritime sector more just, more equitable, and more humane.

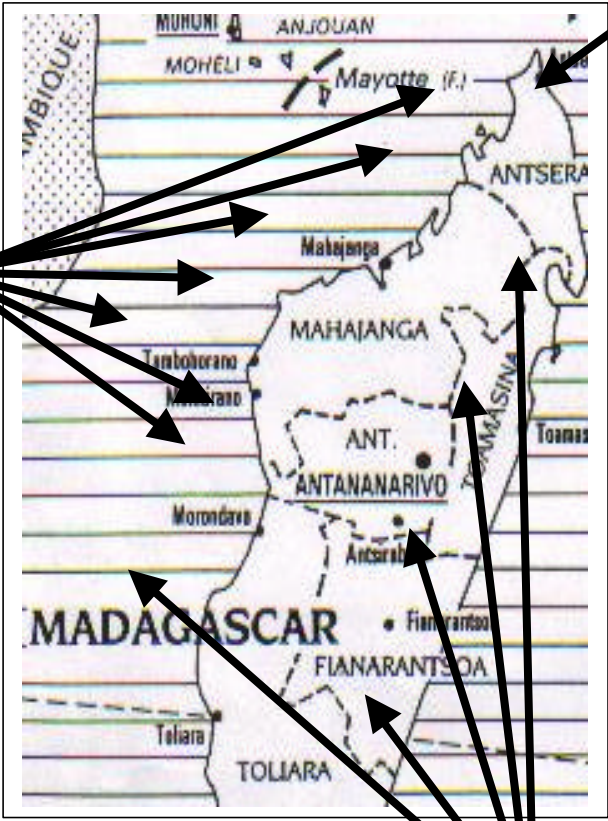
N.B. : it is important to note that even in those places with significant traditional shrimp fisheries, local consumption is always met by supplies of by-catch. Whilst the catches from the industrial fishery are exclusively for export.

B
NORTH-EAST
Eastern sea board
fishery is mainly

AREAS
OF SHRIMP
PRODUCTION
FOR
TRADITIONAL
FISHERIES



A
AMBARO Bay
NARINDRA Bay
BOENI Bay
SOALALA
MAINTIRANO
BELO
MORONDAVA



ANTALAHA
MAROANTSETRA
SAINTE MARIE
SOANIERANA
IVONGO
FENERIVE-EST
ANKADIRANO
FOULPOINTE
TOAMASINA
VATOMANDRY
MAROSIKY
MAHANORO
Etc

N.B. : Conventional traditional or subsistence fishing practices are widespread throughout the coast line. In most coastal communities fishing is what most families depend on for their livelihoods. Even when the market is poor in a particular community, mutual support and complementarity provide the rest. Meanwhile industrial exploitation is

**FISHING AREAS
FOR
CONVENTIONAL
TRADITIONAL.**