

A Balanced Approach

Daouda Ndiaye of the National Collective of Artisanal Fishermen of Senegal (CNPS from the French) wears several hats. He is Co-chair of the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) and vice-president in charge of communication of the Joint Commission of the Professional Artisanal Fisheries Organizations of Senegal (CONIPAS). Edited excerpts of a conversation with him about Senegal's artisanal fisheries and a wide range of issues

On the crisis in Senegal's artisanal fishing

Fish plays a very important role in nutrition and livelihood here. The volume of catches is estimated at over 0.46 million tonnes, representing high level of protein consumption. The COVID-19 pandemic left the fishing industry here in a very difficult situation. Several factors contributed to this. Worldwide economic disruption from the pandemic affected Senegal's fish exports. COVID-19-related restrictions hit local fishing activities, hampering fishing operations. Fluctuating fish stocks, overfishing, degradation of the coastal environment, climate change, unsustainable fishing practices have also contributed. Conflicts over access to resources and governance also play a role.

On depleting fish stocks and workers migrating to Europe in 2005-06

Several factors combined to cause the depletion of fish stocks, contributing to irregular migration from Senegal to Europe. Overfishing is driven by the growing demand for fish, the loss of coastal habitat due to urbanization and environmental degradation, as well as the effects of climate change on marine resources. All these contribute to the depletion of fish stocks. That, in turn, affects local food security. Fishers have to seek opportunities elsewhere. Governance also bears on all this, such as ineffective management of fisheries resources and conflicts over access. The result is irregular migration, as happened in 2005-06, when many young Senegalese began seeking migration to Europe.

On the influx of foreign trawlers

Foreign trawlers, often operating without adequate controls, exacerbate the pressure on local fish stocks. Fishing agreements that sometimes favour foreign interests over those of local fishers have compounded the problems. In addition, weak fishing laws and inadequate enforcement allow unsustainable practices.

On improving fisheries management

Only an integrated approach can realistically alleviate the crisis. It will

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include improving the management of fisheries resources through stricter laws and rigorous enforcement. Regulatory and monitoring institutions need strengthening. We need to negotiate just fishing agreements with foreign countries to avoid excessive exploitation of our resources and ensure benefits for local communities. Sustainable fishing techniques must be encouraged to preserve fish stocks and minimize adverse impacts on the marine ecosystem. Communities dependent on fishing need help to diversify their livelihoods to reduce pressure on marine resources. If such measures are combined and adapted to local realities, sustainable management of Senegal's fisheries will become a reality.

*This interview with **Daouda Ndiaye** (davidndiaye68@gmail.com), Co-ordinator, Collectif national des pêcheurs artisanaux du Sénégal (CNPS), WFFP Co-Chair and CONIPAS Vice-president in charge of communication, Senegal, was conducted by **N. Venugopalan** (icsf@icsf.net), Programme Manager, ICSF*

On steps already taken

The government has undertaken legislative reforms that will strengthen the regulatory framework for fishing and improve governance. Campaigns have been initiated to raise awareness and educate fishers and communities about the challenges of preventing over-fishing and promoting sustainability. International organizations like FAO provide technical and financial support to build capacity and implement sustainable initiatives.

On small-scale fishers’ demands

They are diverse and often linked to their working conditions, as also the management of fisheries resources and socio-economic challenges. Small-scale fishers are pressing for fair access to resources, stressing the need to protect their traditional fishing rights. Artisanal fishers are calling for stricter measures like severe penalties to combat illegal fishing. They demand improved working conditions at sea, including vessel safety and the provision of adequate safety equipment. Fishers seek improvements in the value chain; for example, more investment in infrastructure like landing quays, storage facilities and fish markets. They desire participation in taking decisions related to the management of fishery resources, emphasizing the importance of true consultation and collaboration, rather than fictitious participation.

On the EU’s new fishing protocol

The last protocols signed between the EU and Senegal were in 2019, are to end in December 2023. Our organizations have asked the government to not sign any new agreements that will cause further depletion of marine resources.

On combating IUU fishing that leads to an estimated annual loss of US\$90 billion

Preventing losses from illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in Senegal requires several actions in concert.

Increased monitoring to detect and deter IUU practices, for example. It could include the use of modern technology like satellite surveillance. Enforcement of existing laws against IUU fishing must be improved, including severe and

exemplary penalties on offenders. We must work with neighbouring nations because illegal activities often cross maritime borders. Senegal must involve fishing communities in monitoring and denouncing illegal activities by raising awareness of their destructive impacts, as also the need to encourage sustainable practices. The capacity of regulatory bodies and law enforcement agencies needs improvement. Greater collaboration among governments, civil society organizations and the private sector will encourage holistic and sustainable solutions.

On the damage from large vessels and their effects on small-scale fishers

With their large capacities, large vessels contribute to overfishing and the deterioration of marine habitats, hitting fish stocks. Certain types of fishing, particularly bottom trawling, can damage marine habitats like the seabed. With their destructive fishing gear, large vessels contribute to biodiversity loss. Large vessels contribute to marine pollution by dumping plastic waste, oil discharges and other forms of pollution; they harm the marine ecosystems and the livelihood of small-scale fishers.

Be they foreign or domestic, large vessels compete with small-scale fishers; this competition is unequal, given the limited means of small-scale fishers. Small-scale fishers, often dependent on coastal areas, face increased competition for access to resources due to the presence of large vessels.

International fishing agreements are unbalanced; they favour the interests of large fleets to the detriment of small-scale local fishers. Alleviating these problems requires effective regulation, strengthening of fisheries governance, encouragement of sustainable fishing and promotion of just agreements that to protect the needs of small-scale fishers and the marine environment.

On overfishing or IUU fishing by foreign vessels

Yes, foreign vessels are involved in such practices, including fishing in prohibited areas, under-reporting catches, using illegal fishing gear, or other activities that violate current regulations.



Mbour fish landing site, Senegal. Fishers seek improvements in the value chain; for example, more investment in infrastructure like landing quays, storage facilities and fish markets

On controlling illegal activity

Monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) measures are crucial in the fight against overfishing and IUU fishing. These may include various initiatives and technologies that make it possible to track the movements of fishing vessels in real time. It could ensure transparency, enabling verification of vessel activities; this does not happen right now. The use of maritime patrols to monitor fishing zones helps detect any illegal activity. This may require specific and dedicated law enforcement agencies.

The adoption and enforcement of stricter laws governing fishing is crucial. Co-operation between nations to share information, harmonize standards and co-ordinate monitoring is important, especially to address cross-border fishing. If implemented consistently and effectively, these measures will help conserve marine resources and support small-scale fishers.

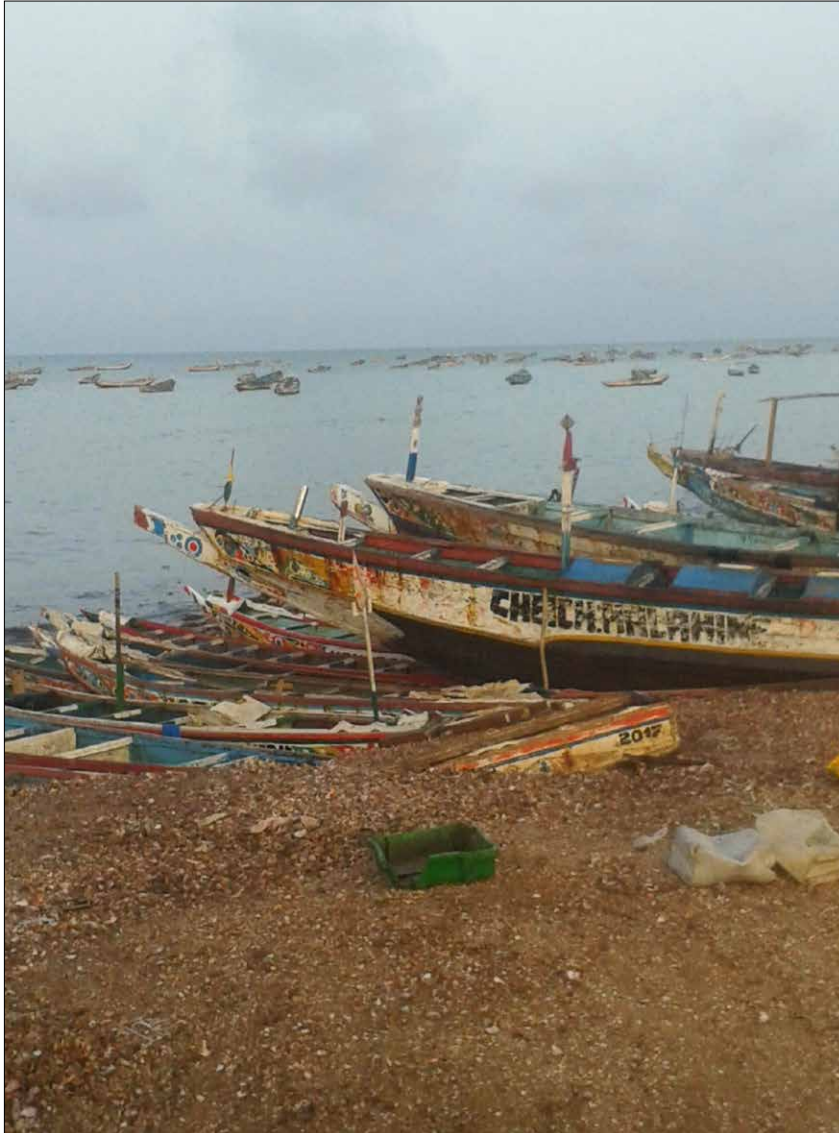
On the first African Maritime Forces Summit held in Cape Verde in March 2023

Such events can provide a platform for discussing best MCS practices and combating illegal practices. They can also foster regional and international collaboration to strengthen maritime surveillance capacities and promote concerted approaches for the sustainable management of marine resources.

On the 2013 initiative launched in Yaounde, Cameroon

The 2013 initiative refers to the Yaounde Partnership Agreement against IUU fishing in the West African region. Also called the Yaounde Action Plan, this agreement aims to strengthen regional co-operation to combat IUU fishing and promote sustainable management of marine resources. Its architecture divides the west coast of Africa into zones A to G, each covering waters

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Mbour fish landing site, Senegal. Some workers may face difficult working conditions, including long hours, extended periods at sea, and physically demanding tasks

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under the jurisdiction of the coastal countries concerned; it establishes a code of conduct, promoting the co-ordination of fisheries-related surveillance, control and enforcement activities. It encourages member states to adopt measures to combat IUU fishing, enhance transparency in the fisheries sector and promote regional co-operation. It also emphasizes the need to develop national and regional capacities for MCS.

On working and living conditions of Senegalese workers on European vessels

They vary depending on a number of factors like company policies, local

and international regulations, and the implementation of labour standards.

Some workers may face difficult working conditions, including long hours, extended periods at sea, and physically demanding tasks. The safety of workers at sea is also a concern; accidents or injuries do occur. Wages may vary but there are concerns about the fair remuneration of Senegalese workers on these vessels, particularly in relation to workers of other nationalities. Foreign workers may face challenges in protecting their rights under labour law, particularly if they work on foreign-flagged vessels. Workers sometimes cannot access information on their rights; even if they know them, they might face obstacles in asserting their rights or reporting violations. A number of international initiatives and agreements aim to promote decent working conditions for fishers, like the International Labour Organization’s (ILO) C188 (Work in Fishing Convention). Their implementation, however, is not effective.

On the benefits of best practices to Senegalese workers on European vessels

Some employers and shipowners might adopt the best practices on working conditions, safety and workers’ rights; others, such as Chinese boats, have shortcomings. The best practices should include reasonable working hours; safe working conditions and tasks adapted to workers’ abilities; and fair and transparent wages, in line with international labour standards. Independent monitoring and collaboration between governments, companies and civil society organizations, and compliance with international labour standards are essential.

On EU-Senegal deal on wages, given minimum monthly wage of US \$658

Each country determines its own minimum wage, taking into account its economic and social realities. In the Fisheries Partnership Agreements (FPAs), the payment system for Senegalese workers on EU vessels depends on the specific terms of each agreement. These agreements often

govern aspects like access for European vessels to Senegalese waters, fishing quotas, access rights and, sometimes, working conditions for fishers.

On FPAs vessels using flags of convenience

This is driven by tax advantages or more flexible regulations in the country where the vessel is registered. It is often to the detriment of safety standards, working conditions and environmental sustainability.

On FPAs preventing such deals

To prevent the use of flags of convenience in fisheries agreements, they may include specific and varied provisions to ensure that vessels comply with international standards on maritime safety, working conditions and the conservation of marine resources. They may also include requirements for vessels to comply with the coastal State's regulations on working conditions and environmental standards. Unfortunately, compliance is weak due to corruption.

On other requirements

Vessels operating under these agreements must comply with international standards for maritime safety, resource conservation and working conditions. Agreements may require greater transparency on ship ownership and information on compliance with international standards. Specific measures can ensure sustainability and conservation.

On benefits from them to fishing communities

FPAs with the EU and the so-called mixed fishing licences managed by Chinese companies have negative impacts on fishers and their communities. The benefits depend on the agreement design, on how it is negotiated and implemented. FPAs could be investments in fisheries-related infrastructure, such as ports and fish processing facilities, which can benefit local communities. They should be designed to promote sustainable fishing, respect workers' rights and ensure a fair distribution of benefits to local fishing communities. Monitoring, transparency and involvement of local stakeholders are essential.

On climate change

The Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimates that, by 2030, some 116 million Africans could be living in low-lying, densely populated coastal areas. The IPCC stresses the need for co-ordinated action to cope with rising sea levels; it deplores the fact that too few tangible adaptation measures have been implemented. It highlights the growing vulnerability of coastal zones in Africa and the urgent need for co-ordinated action to cope with rising sea levels. Senegal's coastal areas like Saint-Louis, Dakar and Ziguinchor are also vulnerable to these changes, requiring local and national adaptation strategies.

On the vulnerability of Senegal's coastal areas

Fishing communities face challenges like coastal erosion, flooding and storm surges linked to rising sea levels. Existing inequalities can make conditions more difficult for Senegal's fishers by exacerbating disparities in access to resources and opportunities.

Population growth, rapid urbanization, increased demand for water and land, and destructive activities such as sand mining compromise marine habitats and breeding areas, breaking the resilience of coastal communities.

Achieving the SDGs requires a holistic approach including efforts to promote sustainable fisheries, build the adaptive capacity and resilience of coastal communities, and manage land and natural resource sustainably.

The importance of involving local communities, promoting environmental sustainability and implementing inclusive and equitable policies is crucial to mitigating the negative impacts.

On fishmeal production and industrial pollution

Senegal's fishmeal factories are supplied by both foreign and domestic trawlers, as well as artisanal fishers, depending on the practices and policies in place. Their rapid growth has raised concerns of overfishing and environmental impacts. Industrial pollution has affected water quality in coastal areas,

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notably by contaminating drinking water sources. Discharges from these and other industrial activities have introduced harmful substances into the marine ecosystem. Offshore gas drilling terminals threaten environmental disturbances, including changes in marine habitats and water quality.

Concerns over chemical spills, oil accidents and disruption of fish migrations abound. In particular, they endanger coastal communities like Kayar that depend on artisanal fishing. Conflicts over resource use, environmental degradation and risks to the health of local populations can generate tensions.

On the scope of Senegal's international fish trade

Cross-border trade is a significant component of Senegal's fishing economy, driven by exports to lucrative markets like the EU. Often there's trade among neighbouring countries to meet local and regional demand. If a significant proportion of production

is exported to more remunerative markets, it can lead to supply challenges for inland regions. Cross-border trade is essential for consumers in inland regions, for nutrition security there.

The dynamics of the fish trade can have complex implications. Trade policies and practices need to be balanced to support both export to lucrative markets and meeting local and regional needs.

For more

Collectif national des pêcheurs artisanaux du Sénégal (CNPS)

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A Health Check

https://www.icsf.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/3186_art02.pdf

Growing pains

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