

Poachers routed by community patrols

by Peter Lowrey¹

Bongolon, Guinea

An experiment in community surveillance of inshore fishing grounds has succeeded in reducing illegal incursions by industrial trawlers by 59 per cent. The success suggests that partnerships between small-scale fishers in their motorised canoes and the Guinean coast guard — which lacks the equipment and resources to patrol 300 kilometres of coastline effectively — may be the key to reducing incursions.

Deaths at sea

Poor fishing communities from the Congo to Senegal complain bitterly about daily, sometimes fatal, encounters with industrial fishing boats that poach in the richly stocked zone reserved for small-scale fishing. The industrial boats, some national, others foreign, destroy the nets of the small boats when they drag their heavy industrial nets over them. They rarely pay compensation.

In Guinea in 2000, before community patrols began in the zone around Bongolon and two other project fishing villages, industrial boats made 450 illegal incursions into the zone, according to government figures. The boats injured 12 fishers in collisions with their canoes. Only 56 incursions were recorded in the first six months of 2002.

Partnership is hailed as the way forward

FAO's Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme is hailing the success of the project as proof that bringing small-scale fishing communities into the fishing sector as full partners is the way forward, both for poverty reduction and for fisheries conservation.

In Bongolon, trouble with industrial boats had reached crisis proportions. Five men had died when their boat was destroyed by a trawler. Small-scale boat crews were afraid to put to sea. Now, according to community elder Sekhouna Sylla, vil-

lagers are overjoyed that, thanks to the new surveillance system, fishing has resumed.

"Many of us are now able to obtain credit at the Rural Credit Bank because they now believe that we will be able to repay the loans by catching and selling fish," he says. "Fishing families have started sending their children to school again."



Selected fishers in Bongolon, Guinea use a satellite-positioning receiver (in fisher's left hand) and radio to report the position of illegal vessels to the coast guards

Photo: FAO/ D. Minkoh

Will surveillance be expanded?

In Conakry, the capital, members of the National Coordinating Unit of FAO's Sustainable Fisheries Livelihoods Programme are important players in key fisheries institutions. They must act as catalysts and advocates within the fisheries establishment if the partnership between fishing communities and the coast guard is to be institutionalized, with a dedicated operating budget to cover its extension to the entire coastline.

"I have done a major impact study on the community surveillance project, which documents its success," says Mamadou Moussa Diallo, a member of the National Coordinating Unit and a socioeconomist at the influential Boussoura National Centre for Fisheries Science. "I think I am getting through to my

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colleagues about the system. I explain the methodology and how it works. They are interested."

Poverty reduction potential

Guinea has a national poverty reduction strategy that includes the country's 30,000 small-scale fishers.

Abdourahamane Kaba, Director-General of the Boussoura Centre, explains that coastal fisheries are not at their limits. "There are important resources that are not sufficiently exploited. Small-scale fishers will have to diversify and catch high-value species. They will need training and new techniques. But there is a potential for fisheries to contribute to poverty reduction," he says.

The coast of Guinea is guarded by the National Centre for Fisheries Surveillance and Protection,

which has a budget for six or seven patrols per month. How does Mohamed Sidibé, the Centre's Assistant Director-General, rate the community surveillance experiment?

"It is a good success. After all, now our boats can intervene when there is a call and not patrol at random," he says. "In the beginning, my patrol officers were a bit sensitive about the project – they thought they might be replaced by village patrols – but now the spirit has changed. The system isn't perfect, but we can perfect it."

"The Centre doesn't have the means to expand the network, but community surveillance has been included in the government strategy against poverty," he says. "The government will find the means to pay for its expansion."

Empowering participation: The Community-based Coastal Resource Management Festival was time to celebrate, reflect and ponder over strategies

by Nalini Nayak¹

Source: *Samudra* July 2003

The Community-based Coastal Resources Management (CBCRM) Festival was held between 2 and 4 June 2003 in Subic Bay, Zambales, Philippines. About 150 CBCRM practitioners, implementers, researchers and advocates from coastal communities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academic and research institutions, development organisations and government agencies in the Philippines and selected countries in East Asia, Europe and North America participated. The Festival critically analysed the multifaceted achievements of CBCRM, while celebrating its gains, so as to learn lessons that will guide CBCRM practice into the future.

There was much to celebrate at the Festival, despite the fact that several fishers have been killed, while others remain in prison for conscientiously safeguarding their marine resources and apprehending illegal fishers.

The CBCRM movement could not have achieved this level of commitment but for a long and persistent process of interaction and collaboration among the coastal communities, NGOs, academics, scientists and funding agencies.

"Our involvement in CBCRM has not only changed our perspective about our fishery but it has continued to develop our views on the whole," said Pedro Valparaíso at a creative panel discussion at the start of the festival.

"It was we women who moved first," added Patricia Panaligan, chairperson of a local people's organisation (PO). "We decided to establish the fish sanctuaries and our men backed us up, assisting in demarcating it with buoys and bamboos."

From the manner in which these fisherfolk spoke out at the festival, it was quite obvious that they were not only capable but also committed to the concept of CBCRM. This seemed to be the result of a dual process that has emerged as the crux of CBCRM, namely, a painstaking process of capacity-building of POs through very creative and genuine participatory rural appraisal (PRA), the motto being "participation that empowers, with equity as the guiding principal".

This process that commenced in the Philippines more than a decade ago as an NGO initiative of partnership with coastal communities to build

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