



African Union



INFORMATION NOTE

MECHANISMS FOR ESTABLISHING AND STRENGTHENING LINKAGES BETWEEN SPECIALIZED REGIONAL FISHERIES INSTITUTIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCIES

Key messages:

- Africa is endowed with productive aquatic ecosystems with significant fishing and aquaculture activities that constitute the fisheries and aquaculture sector. However, the sector's potential has not been fully exploited and does not therefore significantly contribute to increased GDP, food security and poverty alleviation in the five regions of the continent.
- This is in part due to failure to implement objectives set legislations; non-operational financing mechanisms and insufficient budgetary resource mobilization; proliferation of institutions working concurrently but inconsistently within the fisheries sector; multiple membership to other RECs with distinct agendas; absence of formal agreement between institutions; absence of a coordination mechanism; and lack of functional interactions between partnering institutions.
- There is need to develop mechanisms for establishing and strengthening linkages between specialized regional fisheries institutions and environmental agencies.

Mechanism for establishing and strengthening linkages

Observed mechanisms for strengthening linkages amongst RFBs and RECs include: establishing collaborative engagements, effective consultations, support to policy, proactive institutional linkage, efforts to strengthen linkages, strengthening linkages between science and policy, cooperate governance, and abiding to the Code of conduct. Other suggested approaches for strengthening collaboration between specialized regional fisheries institutions and environmental agencies include regular reporting; instituting engagement platforms; monitoring and evaluation; control, surveillance, and accountability; political accountability; enhanced coordinated institutional governance; minimizing on REC vs RFB engagements; harmonized policy frameworks; enhancing awareness and human-capacity development; harmonized strategic planning, instituting awareness creation mechanisms; and effective communication strategy.

Purpose:

The purpose of this information note is to present recommendations for mechanisms for establishing and strengthening linkages between specialized regional fisheries institutions and environmental agencies.

Background:

Africa is endowed with productive aquatic ecosystems with significant fishing and aquaculture activities that constitute the fisheries and aquaculture sector. The sector provides economic growth, livelihoods and food security benefits to the continent's inhabitants and beyond. However, the sector's potential has not been fully exploited and does not therefore significantly contribute to increased GDP, food security and poverty alleviation in the five regions of the continent. This is in part due to: poor coordination amongst actors; lack of coherence in governance instruments and approaches; increasing incidences of Illegal Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing due to weak capacity in the AU member states; weak evidence to foster reform; generally weak capacity and poor infrastructure; and lack of inclusive governance as observed by the first and second Conferences of African Ministers of Fisheries and Aquaculture (CAMFA I and CAMFA II). This observation evoked a continent-wide intervention in the governance of Africa's fisheries and aquaculture sector, which saw the endorsement of the Policy Framework and Reform Strategy (PFRS) for fisheries and aquaculture in Africa, as a blueprint for facilitating sustainable development in Africa's fisheries. With EU support, AU-IBAR alongside AUDA-NEPAD sought to address these challenges during the FishGov1 project, but further observed: failure to implement the objectives set by the legislation; non-operational financing mechanisms and insufficient budgetary resource mobilization; proliferation of institutions working concurrently but inconsistently within the fisheries sector; multiple membership to other RECs with distinct agendas; absence of formal agreement between institutions; absence of a coordination mechanism; and lack of functional interactions between the bodies of the two institutions were observed.

Situation at hand:

Assessment under FishGOV1 revealed numerous inadequacies including: (i). Failure to implement the objectives set by the legislation; (ii). Non-operational financing mechanisms and

insufficient budgetary resource mobilization; (iii). Proliferation of institutions working concurrently but inconsistently within the fisheries sector; (iv). Multiple membership to other RECs with distinct agendas; (v). Absence of formal agreement between institutions; (vi). Absence of a coordination mechanism; and (vii). Lack of functional interactions between the bodies of the two institutions. Given these weaknesses primarily as a result of absence of formal institutional linkages, weak collaboration and cooperation between the institutions, there was need for a deliberate effort to deepen knowledge and understanding of establishing effective partnerships frameworks that create the right structure and process for success.

It was thought that this could be well accomplished through developing mechanisms for establishing and strengthening linkages between specialized regional fisheries institutions and environmental agencies and proposition of benefits of establishing effective and inclusive partnerships keeping in view structures for monitoring measure to ensure success. Similarly, the importance of enhancing collaboration between institutions responsible for fisheries and aquaculture and multiple resources users (e.g. Regional Sea Conventions (RSCs) mining, water basin management authorities, forestry etc.) could not be over emphasized; particularly from the point of view of establishing integrated management systems to optimize resources through collaborative management.

Mechanism for establishing and strengthening linkages between specialized regional fisheries institutions and environmental agencies

Several regional fisheries institutions (RFMOs, RFBs) and environmental agencies operate collaboratively and these partnerships are guided by different mechanisms. Identified mechanisms in place include:

- i. **Collaborative engagements:** such as that organized by the African Union Commission (AUC), in collaboration with NPCA and AU-IBAR. AUC organized a Think Tank Event

on fostering institutional collaboration and cooperation in regional fisheries management in Africa in Johannesburg, South Africa, September 2013. Participants at the meeting included RECs, RFMOs, RFBs and LME-based projects in Africa. This event is consistent with a key pillar in the strategic reform areas of the Policy and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa.

- ii. Effective consultations:** with stakeholders is promoted in order to obtain their views and informed consent for decisions that may affect them. Participatory decision-making is vested at the lowest possible decentralized level and the inputs and support of those who could be affected by decisions taken into account. As a result, institutional linkages are established with line ministries and environmental agencies and partnerships and collaboration promoted between private sector, international organizations, NGOs and CSOs.
- iii. Support to policy:** involves advocating for coherence and enhanced linkages between small-scale fisheries, overarching fisheries sectoral policies and strategies and national planning processes for environmental conservation and development.
- iv. Proactive institutional linkage:** as that in the Central Africa Region, ECCAS in 2007 took the important step of recognizing COREP as a specialized technical institution under ECCAS and agreed on more sustainable funding arrangements to ensure COREP's activities including environmental conservation could be undertaken. There is also a semblance of this institutional linkage between EAC and LVFO. Such an innovative approach is important for improving fisheries governance and environmental management in the region.
- v. Efforts to strengthen linkages:** among RFBs and environmental agencies through Memoranda of Understanding and Letters of Agreement.
- vi. Strengthening linkages between science and policy:** to ensure holistic planning, guiding decision making processes have been strengthened for improved implementation of interventions on climate change adaptation in

fisheries.

- vii. Cooperate governance:** this involves identification and harmonization of common areas of interest in programmes and projects, activities, mandates, policy objectives and guidelines, strategic plans and core values.
- viii. Code of conduct:** The FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, adopted by COFI in 1995, provides a framework for national and international efforts to ensure sustainable exploration of aquatic living resources in harmony with the environment. Its overall objective is to promote sustainable development, protection of the aquatic environment and the maintenance of biodiversity while contributing to the safety of fishing operations. It is a voluntary instrument containing principles (set out in Article 6) and standards applicable to the conservation, management and development of all fisheries. Articles of particular relevance to RFMOs and RFABs include Article 7, which comprises provisions on management objectives, management framework and procedures, data gathering and management, application of the precautionary approach and the establishment and implementation of management measures; and Article 8, which deals with fishing operations and contains provisions on the duties of flag States and port States.

To ensure effective establishment of linkages between specialized regional fisheries institutions and environmental agencies, the following are suggested approaches for strengthening collaboration between specialized regional fisheries institutions and environmental agencies:

- i. Reporting.** Developing a coordinated reporting mechanism through which the stakeholders are able to report on progress attained in performing their respective mandates is key. This may be important to exchange experiences and ideas in order to learn from each other. It may also be important to serve other functions such as advocacy, resource mobilization, and providing direction between specialized regional fisheries institutions

and environmental agencies. While this is existing under the various RFBs, the reporting mechanisms are not visible and rarely utilized. We therefore strongly recommend that AU-IBAR takes the mantle to strengthen the mechanism.

ii. Engagement Platforms. The linkages between specialized regional fisheries institutions and environmental agencies should be known, owned, and implemented mutually by all the stakeholders. Fostering cohesion of the platforms amongst the stakeholders will potentially be of interest in the development of the fisheries and aquaculture/environment sector. The platforms should provide for different levels of stakeholder participation, for instance, technical, executive, and policy, and frequently/periodically convening of the stakeholders. The engaged platforms may play pivotal roles including the provision of policy and strategic directions for the transformation of the fisheries and environment sector; enhanced coordination and harmonization of interventions and sharing experiences for effective execution of mandates; promoting advocacy and resource mobilization for the implementation of fisheries and environment pertinent activities; as well as to serve as the link with other relevant continental and global platforms.

iii. Monitoring and Evaluation, Control and Surveillance, and Accountability. The effective strengthening of linkages between specialized regional fisheries institutions and environmental agencies is anchored on harmonized Monitoring and Evaluation, Control and Surveillance, and Accountability of the stakeholders' commitment to ensuring the success of the sector. This may be demonstrated through the collective responsible ownership of the stakeholders' obligation to monitor and report on progress towards achieving their mandates. This approach fundamentally provides accountabilities on financial, performance and political. Financial accountability concerns tracking and reporting on allocation,

disbursement, and utilization of financial resources. The operational basis for financial accountability begins with internal financial systems expected to adhere to uniform accounting rules and standards across the AU fisheries and environmental platforms. The performance accountability will be in terms of agreed-upon performance targets in relation to scope, quality, and delivery schedule. The focus will be on service delivery, outputs, outcomes, and impacts through feedback and learning. The performance accountability will be linked to financial accountability accrued for the intended goods, services, and benefits for the sector stakeholders. But the emphasis will be on procedural compliance of performance based on results.

iv. The political accountability: will focus on institutions, procedures and mechanisms that will ensure that government delivers on promises made for the realization of the strengthened linked specialized regional fisheries institutions and environmental agencies.

v. Enhanced coordinated institutional governance. The effective establishment/strengthened linkages between specialized regional fisheries institutions and environmental agencies in AU is usually entrusted to the ministries or departments of fisheries at national levels with the mandate to manage and develop the sector for sustainable socio-economic benefits. In most regions of Africa, the member states have established RFBs to ensure regional collaboration and coherence in policy and management practices of the sector. To effectively establish/strengthen linkages between the specialized fisheries bodies, the consistent huge overlap of mandates and lack of coordinated activities and programs between these institutions should be alleviated. In some regions, the RFBs tend to overlap the roles of the national fisheries research institutes which creates duplication of efforts and resource wastage

vi. Minimizing on REC vs RFB engagements. Many states/countries belong to more than one RFB which creates financial burdens. This is especially more wasteful when more than one RFB is involved in similar activities. Strong intensification/strengthening cooperation and re-alignment of mandates and activities between RFBs and the national fisheries research institutions should be prioritized to ensure synergy and coherence.

vii. Harmonized policy frameworks. The roles of RFBs should be enhanced in creating integrated and iterative systems of governance strategic actions. The integration of fisheries and aquaculture into the regional political and economic agenda should be strengthened. Priority focus should consider the harmonization and appropriate policy and regulatory guidelines and frameworks on the aspects of national differences in fisheries and aquaculture. AU-IBAR should cascade to the RFBs and engage in policy formulation and harmonization amongst the fisheries bodies, this will help to align regional and national policies to the PFRS.

viii. Enhancing awareness and human-capacity development. Capacity development is a key building block for creating knowledge,

empowerment, and enablement for effective participation in decision-making and for improved governance of the sector. Capacity building should be strengthened in various RFBs in the many Member States. This should attract a high priority, especially with respect to the effective implementation of reforms aimed at effective establishment/strengthened linkages between specialized regional fisheries institutions and environmental agencies.

ix. Harmonized Strategic planning: While many of the RFBs and the national fisheries research institutions among the AU-MS have strategic plans, they tend to focus on similar directions and hence overlap. This creates duplication of activities and a waste of resources and time. Therefore, effective establishment/strengthened linkages between specialized regional fisheries institutions and environmental agencies should be anchored on the improved collective synergy of strategic plans spearheaded by AU-IBAR.

x. Awareness creation mechanisms and effective communication strategy: This will help to harmonize information across the different regions.



African Union – Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR)
Kenindia Business Park, Museum Hill, Westlands Road
PO Box 30786-00100 Nairobi, Kenya
Tel: +254 (20) 3674 000 | Fax: +254 (20) 3674 341 / 3674 342
Email: ibar.office@au-ibar.org | Website: www.au-ibar.org