



## POLICY BRIEF

### MECHANISMS FOR RATIONALIZATION OF FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE PLATFORMS AND NETWORKS IN AFRICA AND ANCHORING THEM TO REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES AND REGIONAL FISHERIES ORGANIZATIONS

**COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIPS ARE THE GLUE AMONG KEY STAKEHOLDERS WILLING TO WORK TOGETHER, SHARING THEIR ASPIRATIONS AND THEIR EXPECTATIONS. TODAY, PARTNERSHIPS IN AFRICA ARE IN SOME INSTANCES FRAGMENTED, UNBALANCED, AND NOT SUFFICIENTLY STRATEGIC. STATES, RECS, IGOS, AND PAN-AFRICAN ORGANIZATIONS CAN OVERCOME EXISTING CHALLENGES IN FORGING PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE BLUE ECONOMY BY EFFECTIVELY PARTICIPATING IN PARTNER MAPPING, BRIDGING INFORMATION GAPS. AMONG AND BETWEEN STATES, RECS, AND IGOS WORLDWIDE, GROWING GEOPOLITICAL AND SECURITY CONCERNS AND CONSTRAINTS OFTEN JEOPARDIZE THE SCOPE AND SUSTAINABILITY OF PARTNERSHIP OUTCOMES.**

UNECA, 2016.

#### Executive Summary

Fisheries and Aquaculture networks and platforms are created to facilitate information and knowledge sharing, responsible production, improve sector resilience and provide training and capacity development opportunities across regions. Many of Africa's platforms/networks carry out work that overlap or duplicate each others' roles, resulting in potential wastage of funds, human resources, time as well as inefficiency in implementation of their roles. Rationalization refers to re-organization or streamlining of organization(s) to make them more cohesive by complementing each others' efforts and building synergies in order to increase their operating efficiency. Anchorage of fisheries and aquaculture platforms and networks to regional economic communities and regional fisheries organizations is expected promote linkages and coordination amongst national and regional fisheries and aquaculture non-state actors (NSAs) for improved and effective services to their constituencies and enhance relationship between NSAs and State Actors (SAs). Linkages and collaboration between fisheries and aquaculture networks or platforms, regional economic communities (RECs), and regional fisheries bodies (RFBs) should improve their performance. This consultancy reviewed previous efforts aimed at implementation rationalization

and anchorage of fisheries and aquaculture institutions in Africa, delved into current status and operations of these institutions, sought views of stakeholders on proposed rationalization and anchorage including merits and demerits thereof and recommended approaches to adopt when implementing rationalization and anchorage in a way that ought to overcome the shortcomings of previous efforts. Out of the twenty-one (21) fisheries and aquaculture platforms and networks identified by the consultants, 33.3% of the continental and 44.4% of the regional platforms and networks were aligned to the Policy Framework and Reform Strategy (PFRS), the master plan for transformation on of fisheries and aquaculture in Africa. However, 20.0% of the continental and 22.2% of the regional platforms and networks had no evidence of use or alignment to any instruments or policies. The regional and continental platforms and networks that were evaluated did not have evidence of legal formalisation with other organisations, and with the host state(s) or government(s). It was also observed that there were no guidelines in place for legal formalization of NSAs. Moreover, different countries approach legal formalisation differently and civil law systems or common law legal systems differ in how they deal with organisations not created by the State. In conclusion, rationalization and anchorage of Africa's aquaculture platforms and networks is anticipated to yield significant benefits in terms of effectiveness and functionality of these platforms, as evidenced by the visibility and vibrance of previously rationalized platforms through the initiatives of AU-IBAR and its partners. The process of rationalization and anchorage should however be as inclusive and consultative as possible to allow sustainable and efficient platforms and networks capable of propelling significant reforms of Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa

## **Introduction**

Africa is endowed with diverse fisheries resources with potential to significantly contribute to the socio-economic wellbeing and improved livelihoods of its people. However, the fisheries resources are currently under threat due to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing across African Union Member States (AU-MS) due to lack of policy coherence and coordination in the management of fisheries and aquaculture resources. On the flipside, some fisheries and aquaculture resources are under-exploited.

In order to address these challenges and unlock the full potential of fisheries and aquaculture for food security, livelihoods and wealth creation, major reforms are required in the governance of the sector at national, regional and continental level. Hence, the African Ministers of Fisheries and Aquaculture recommended development of a Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries (PFRS) in Africa that was endorsed by African Heads of States and Governments in 2014. PFRS interventions are aligned to global fisheries and aquaculture instruments. One focus of intervention is the uncoordinated implementation of activities by National, Regional and Continental fisheries and aquaculture networks and platforms. These structures were created to share knowledge, research findings, innovations and information to enhance efficient and responsible production and improve sector resilience. The platform and networks also facilitate access to training and capacity development opportunities across regions. However, many of these platforms/networks carry out work that overlap and duplicate each other both in time and space. Therefore funds, human resources, time and information are haphazardly expended, resulting in inefficiency in implementation of their roles. Rationalization refers to re-organization or streamlining of organization(s) to make them more cohesive by complementing each other's efforts and building synergies in order to increase their operating efficiency. It curtails duplication of efforts and overlap of activities of organizations that have similar aims, objectives and target beneficiaries.

**IN 1998, AFRICA, WHICH IS HOME TO ABOUT 12% OF THE WORLD POPULATION PRODUCED AN ESTIMATED 185, 817 TONS OF FISH, CRUSTACEANS AND MOLLUSCS, CONTRIBUTING ONLY ABOUT 0.6% OF WORLD OUTPUT. EXPERIENCE IN ASIA WHERE ABOUT 89% OF AQUACULTURE OUTPUT WAS PRODUCED, AND ELSEWHERE DEMONSTRATES THAT AQUACULTURE DEVELOPED BECAUSE IT WAS MOSTLY COMMERCIALY ORIENTED AND BENEFITED FROM ENABLING ENVIRONMENT. ENABLING ENVIRONMENT CONSISTED OF SOUND GOVERNMENT POLICIES**

### **FAO, 2001**

Hence, Fishers, fish farmers, producers and processors could derive greater benefits from government programs and market opportunities when their individual efforts are more organized, streamlined, and cohesive. On the other hand, institutional anchorage is the linkage/ collaboration/cooperation/partnership between one organization(s) with another organization(s) that serves to sustain their long-term existence. Anchorage of fisheries and aquaculture platforms and networks to regional institutions will promote linkage and coordination amongst national and regional fisheries and aquaculture Non-State Actors (NSAs) for improved and effective services to their constituencies and enhance relationship between NSAs and State Actors (SAs). Similarly, it would build linkages and collaboration between fisheries and aquaculture networks or platforms, RECs, and RFBs, for improved performance. Overall, rationalization helps with anchorage and anchoring helps with rationalization.

Rationalization and anchorage of aquaculture platforms in Africa is envisioned to contribute to achievement of some of the policy objectives of the PFRS, including:

- i. Establishment of national and sub-national governance and institutional arrangements to ensure that the societal contribution generated by Africa's sectors have the greatest impacts (policy objective 1)
- ii. Strengthening and improvement of the contribution of small-scale fisheries to poverty alleviation, food and nutrition security and socio-economic benefits of fishing communities (policy objective 2)
- iii. Jumpstarting market-led sustainable aquaculture through a variety of strategies including support to development interventions in aquaculture by strong strategic and implementation plans (policy objective 3)
- iv. Strengthening South-South (bilateral and regional) cooperation, and developing coordinated mechanisms among RECs, RFBs and LME-based commissions to ensure coherence of fisheries policies and aquaculture development and their adoption and adaptation (policy objective 5).

The findings of our study are that only a third of the continental platforms and networks and less than a half of the regional platforms and networks are aligned to the Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for the management of fisheries and aquaculture in Africa. The regional and continental networks are neither formally registered with their host governments nor have any formal working arrangements with other platforms/ networks.

### **Approaches and Results**

The study was conducted by a team of 16 experts from the National Fisheries Resources Institute, one of the seven AU Centres of Excellence in Fisheries and Aquaculture. The process of developing strategies for strengthening stakeholders' engagement and role in African fisheries and aquaculture sector involved obtaining the information stipulated in the Terms of Reference (ToRs) through continent-wide stakeholder consultations using key informant interviews (KIIs) with relevant fisheries and aquaculture organizations/institutions/platforms.

The consultants conducted extensive literature reviews on fisheries and aquaculture networks and platforms in Africa and beyond, held several workshops to study and understand the terms of reference for the assignment as well as deliberate on guiding questions that were used for development of a structured questionnaire. The questionnaires were intended to solicit the respondents' views on the proposed rationalization of fisheries and aquaculture platforms and networks and their anchorage to regional organizations. The questionnaire was administered to directors of fisheries and aquaculture, directors of research, fisheries and aquaculture platforms and networks in Africa, Regional Economic Communities, Regional Fisheries Bodies, Regional Seas Conventions, government technocrats and development partners. Ugandan respondents were interviewed face to face while those outside Uganda were contacted electronically. The questionnaires were emailed to twenty-eight fisheries and aquaculture platforms and networks operating at national, regional and continental level.

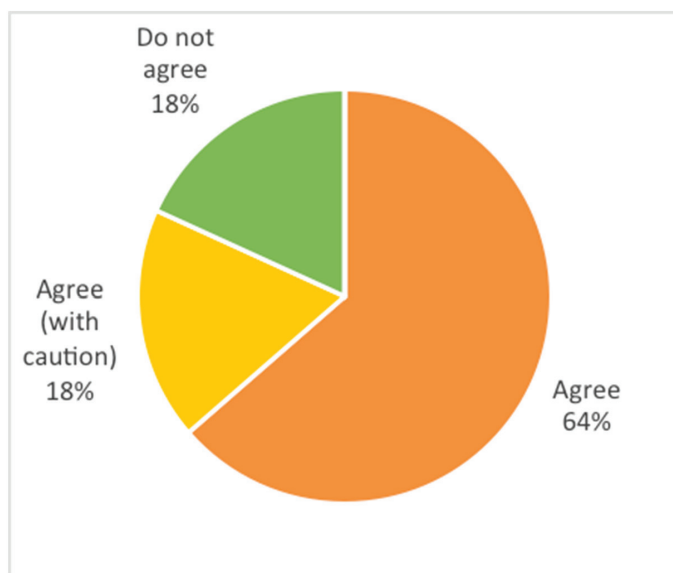
them to regional organizations, two (18.2%) were in agreement but gave caution, while two platforms (18.2%) were not in agreement with rationalization and anchorage to regional organizations.

The networks and platforms that were in agreement with rationalizing fisheries and anchorage of aquaculture platforms and networks affirmed that rationalization can:

- Harmonize operations of fisheries and aquaculture platforms/networks and permit specialization of the platforms to specific interventions, thereby avoiding overlap and duplication of efforts. Improve collaboration and openness between the platforms and networks especially in information sharing where one platform provides information that another platform may require but does not have the means to obtain. This promotes synergy, complementarity and better coordination.
- Control mushrooming and opportunistic platforms/networks with no clear agenda in fisheries and aquaculture development.

Some networks and platforms were however not in agreement with the proposed rationalization and anchorage to regional organizations citing, the following reasons:

- It is better to form umbrella bodies rather than establish new platforms. This would reduce on the multiplicity of platforms/networks and control duplication of efforts.
- Previously rationalized fisheries organizations created with support from governments and donors are on the verge of collapse because they were not nurtured to run sustainably.
- The process of anchoring institutions to regional fisheries organizations and RECs is long and bureaucratic. This has made some institutions to lose interest.
- Running and operating the anchorage network can be restricted by the bureaucracy administration and politics.
- RECs have overarching responsibilities in their regions of jurisdiction and might not be in a position to give adequate attention to



**Figure 1** Views of fisheries and aquaculture Platforms and Networks on rationalization and anchorage

Qualitative data were analyzed using Thematic Content Analysis while quantitative data was analyzed by computing percentages, and used to establish relevant relationships/comparisons. Eleven questionnaires were returned of which seven (63.6%) of them supported the initiative to rationalize platforms and networks and anchor

the operations of fisheries and aquaculture platforms and networks. Therefore, the role of RECs could be limited only to supporting, and not anchoring platforms and networks. Anchorage could weaken the functions and roles of platforms and networks which a risk of generating conflicts of competency.

The consultants reviewed literature on previous efforts at rationalization and institutional anchorage and found that the African Union – Inter African for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) and the African Union Development Agency – New Partnership for Africa’s Development (AUDA-NEPAD) in collaboration with FAO and some RECs facilitated rationalization and institutional anchorage of some fisheries and aquaculture platforms and networks to form specialized regional/continental coordination platforms/networks for specific intervention areas. These institutions include:

- The East Africa Platform of Non-State Actors in Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector (EARFISH)
- Maghrébine Platform for Fisheries; Regional Platform of Active Non-State Actors in the Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector in Central Africa (PRAPAC)
- Southern African Regional Non-State Actors Platform in Fisheries and Aquaculture (SANSAFA);
- West African Non-State Actor Platform for Fisheries and Aquaculture (WANSAFA) which were rationalized to form the African Continental Non-State Actors Coordination Platform in fisheries and Aquaculture (AFRIFISH-NET).
- African Platform for Regional Institutions in Fisheries, Aquaculture and Aquatic Systems (APRIFAAS)
- African Women Fish processors and traders Network (AWFishNET)
- East African Beach Management Unit Platform
- Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO).

The operations of these platforms are linked to their respective RFBs/RECs.

The methods used for rationalization of these institutions involved the following steps:

- i. Introducing the idea to stakeholders
- ii. Consultations and meetings with relevant stakeholders to facilitate establishment of regional platforms with involvement of state actors
- iii. Building consensus on the need for the proposed rationalisation and the proposed roles of the platform/network
- iv. Discussing and agreeing on the governing instrument (constitution) of the rationalised platform/network
- v. Nominating leaders and voting office bearers
- vi. Drafting of the constitutions and action plans for the platform
- vii. Agreement on members’ financial contribution for running the activities of the platform/network.

Collaboration between regional fisheries and aquaculture networks and platforms and regional institutions such as RECs, RFBs and Regional Environmental Institutions, is however still weak.

The fisheries and aquaculture platforms and networks, regional institutions, directors of fisheries and aquaculture that were interviewed and the literature reviewed pointed out the following limitations with the approaches previously used for rationalization:

- i. Inadequate sensitization of the platforms and networks on the benefits of rationalization and the modalities of the rationalization
- ii. Inadequate information used for determining the institutions to rationalize and anchor to specific regional bodies
- iii. Rationalization has mainly followed a top-down approach and has resulted into limited ownership of the platform by the members.
- iv. Some platforms/networks were anchored to institutions that were not yet well set up to operationalize the anchorage. For instance, some RECs had no fisheries and aquaculture department or specialized officers to effectively coordinate with the anchored fisheries and aquaculture platforms/RFBs.

- v. Mechanisms for sustainable funding of the fisheries and aquaculture platforms and networks were not embedded in the rationalization plan of the platforms. Membership fees are the core source of funding for most platforms but this cannot sustain the operations of the rationalized platforms and networks.
  - vi. The previous approaches focused more on efficiency of the organizations at the expense of human capital/capacity building of the association members to effectively run the platforms/networks
  - vii. Membership is not gender and socially inclusive with limited private sector involvement/participation.
  - viii. Inadequate accountability within some organizations which has created mistrust among stakeholders
  - ix. Some rationalized/anchored platforms and networks do not have binding/formal arrangement in the collaboration, which is a risk factor towards long-term engagements.
  - x. Most of the platforms and networks rarely hold meetings with members or other platforms for coordination purposes.
  - xi. Fisheries and aquaculture administration units in some member states do not recognize or support the platforms and networks.
- c. Platforms/networks with similar action plans and performance measures could be identified, their action plans harmonized, and areas requiring rationalization mutually agreed upon.
  - d. Agreement on which forms of rationalization are necessary; e.g., organization management, policy, market, products, etc. or cherry-picking a specific value chain in fisheries and aquaculture.
  - e. The process should be conducted in a climate of cooperation, trust, mutual respect and involvement
  - f. All options for rationalization should be considered, e.g., in cases where some platforms/networks are displaced, they could be re-integrated into regional platforms/ organizations.
  - g. Local, national, continental, and international laws, regulations, and policies through which the rationalized platforms and networks will operate should be recognized and followed
  - h. Operational modalities and roles of the parties undergoing rationalization should be mutually agreed upon.
  - i. Organizations that have been rationalized should take up clear and specific roles and responsibilities in a designated geographical area to avoid conflicts.
  - j. Legally binding agreements need to be drafted and mutually agreed upon by the rationalized platforms and networks.
  - k. A steering committee should be democratically nominated and voted with gender and social inclusivity clear terms of reference for all parties.
  - l. Sustainable funding mechanism apart from membership fees should be arranged and implemented to support the budgets of the platforms and networks. A clear schedule for paying membership fee should be mutually agreed upon and penalties for defaulters prescribed.

The consultants proposed the following steps for rationalization and anchorage respectively:

#### **Proposed mechanisms for rationalizing fisheries platforms and networks**

- a. The idea to rationalize institutions can be initiated by government(s), development partners or the private sector. There should be free back and forth dialogue between the concerned platforms and networks to make them understand the benefits of rationalization and mode of operation of rationalized institutions until consensus/buy-ins are reached.
- b. The rationalization plan should be built on actual, reliable and accurate information on the strategic goals (short, medium, and long term), interventions of the organizations

- m. Training of the bureau on how to manage the platforms and policy framework especially PFRS, AFRM, Blue Economy, CAADP processes, etc.
  - n. A comprehensive communication strategy should be developed for information sharing and interaction among stakeholders.
  - o. Regular and inclusive planning meetings should be scheduled
  - p. Continuous monitoring of progress of the rationalized platforms and support systems to ensure functionality and sustainability should be maintained.
  - q. A conflict management strategy should be developed
  - r. Two-way communication (vertical and horizontal) should be maintained between stakeholders at all levels.
- b. If the proposal is in the interest of both parties, then it can proceed to a formal engagement where proceedings are minuted
  - c. Both the regional organizations and the platforms/networks need to evaluate each other based on technical competence, due diligence and risk assessment.
  - d. The regional organization and the platforms/networks need to discuss and mutually agree on what on their respective roles in the anchorage, in line with national and regional needs.
  - e. Engage in activities that are aligned to prevailing fisheries and aquaculture policies/ governing frameworks or instruments and leading to innovations that are sustainable and have lasting positive impact both economically and socially.
  - f. Discuss and mutually agree upon the operational procedures of the anchorage.
  - g. Jointly develop action plans
  - h. Put in place sustainable funding mechanisms

**Proposed approach for anchoring platforms and networks to regional institutions**

- a. Begin with an informal exploratory phase where the regional organizations and the platforms /networks discuss the possibility of an engagement through anchorage



**Figure 2:** Proposed step by step guide for anchorage of fisheries and aquaculture networks to RFBs and RECS

## Conclusion

Rationalization and anchorage of Africa's aquaculture platforms and networks is anticipated to yield substantial dividends in terms of effectiveness and functionality of these platforms, as evidenced by the visibility and vibrance of previously rationalized platforms through the initiatives of AU-IBAR, AUDA-NEPAD, FAO and some RECs. Specifically, the following outcomes can be expected:

1. Rationalization of platforms and networks can boost the expertise/competencies of members and improve the quality of the products developed.
2. Rationalization is an efficient mechanism for saving time and money
3. RECs can use platforms and networks for technical and policy consultations on issues relating to quality control, sanitation, traceability and self-policing.
4. Challenges are tackled holistically with minimal resources and time.
5. Periodic capacity building for the members, regular meetings, collective planning, and involvement of different players are key elements to effective rationalization and institutional anchorage.
6. Platforms cannot be effectively financed only through membership fees or donor funding. There is need for income generating business models for sustainability

## Implications

- Unintended consequences such as the risk of proliferation of new platforms and networks can occur, if the process of rationalization and anchorage is not properly planned
- Rationalized fisheries organizations are unlikely to last without sustainable financing mechanisms in place.
- Institutions are likely to lose interest in rationalization and anchorage if the process is not quick and straightforward.
- Administrative and political bureaucracies can be a disincentive to smooth operation of the anchored networks and platforms.
- Efforts at rationalization and anchorage may not bear fruit if RECs do not give appropriate

attention to supporting the anchored institutions beyond their broader mandates such as economic integration, promoting prosperity, promoting national rights and free movement of people.

- Individual networks and platforms may not appreciate the benefits of rationalization and anchorage in the absence of proper sensitization and awareness creation
- If the institutions to be rationalized and anchored are not selected based on adequate information, the process may not be successful
- Rationalized networks and platforms that are not actively involved in their formation may not perceive ownership the process and outcome of the resulting institutions, leading to weak partnerships.
- Rationalization and anchorage are likely to be dysfunctional if the anchor institutions do not first put in place specialized fisheries and aquaculture structures or bureaucracies to operationalize the anchorage.
- Networks and platforms will not run efficiently in the absence of capacity building of association members
- Gender and social inclusivity within networks and platforms can promote representation, participation, acceptance and social benefits for a wider spectrum of society.
- Inadequate accountability within organizations can create mistrust among stakeholders
- Lack of formal engagements between rationalized/anchored platforms is a stumbling block to long-term engagements.
- The absence of regular meetings between members of networks and platforms for coordination purposes hinders progress.
- Platforms and networks cannot function properly without support and recognition from fisheries and aquaculture administration units of their respective member states

## Recommendations

The approach to rationalization and anchorage should be revised to allow more informed, inclusive, collaborative and consultative processes that will create efficient, modern and sustainable



platforms and networks with sustainable funding mechanisms. We propose that the following protocol be adopted while implementing rationalization fisheries and aquaculture networks in Africa and anchoring them to RFBs and RECs in the subsequent times.

- Adequate awareness raising on the necessity for rationalization and anchorage
- Purposeful engagements that are responsive to prevailing and future needs.
- Open and transparent engagement among members of platforms to be rationalized and anchored
- Involvement of diverse stakeholders with representation of all gender interests and social groups
- Initiation of rationalization and institutional anchorage at the time when it is necessary
- Accountability of leaders to their constituents
- Collaborative: Members in each institution should work together and also collaborate with other institutions to build synergies for better performance.
- Institutions should share the knowledge by putting in place and applying communication strategies.
- There is need for respect all views and opinions.
- It is important to monitor project implementation impact and keep aligning the project to the expected deliverables
- Involvement of relevant government authorities in all efforts towards rationalization and anchorage of platforms and networks in order to effectively align the interventions of platforms and networks to national and regional development plans and obtain support from the government authorities.

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