COMMUNIQUE

THE AFRICAN WOMEN FISH PROCESSORS AND TRADERS NETWORK (AWFISHNET)

“Bureau Meeting and Training Workshop on Enhancing Awareness and Capacity of Women for Small-Medium Enterprises Development in Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector”

12 - 13 September 2019
ABIDJAN, REPUBLIC OF COTE D’IVOIRE
I. INTRODUCTION

The Bureau Meeting and Training workshop on “Enhancing Awareness and Capacity of Women for Small-Medium Enterprises Development in Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector” of the African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network (AWFISHNET) was organised by the African Union Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) in collaboration with the Government of the Republic of Cote d’Ivoire.

The meeting was held from the 12th to 13th September 2019 at Hôtel Belle Côte Abidjan, Ivory Coast.

The main objective of the meeting was to provide a platform for bureau members and selected experts for sharing and documentation of best practices in fish processing technology and identification of opportunities for enhancing women Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

The specific objectives were to:

a. Establish the status of formation of National networks for women fish processors and traders
b. Enhance knowledge amongst AWFISHNET members on the best practices for fish processing technologies, trade and market development
c. Exchange information on lessons and best practices in fish processing technologies, trade and marketing
d. Compile challenges and opportunities affecting SMEs development for women in fish processing and trade in Africa and develop a capacity empowerment program
e. Develop an AWFISHNET’s capacity empowerment program that responds to the needs of the members.

II. PARTICIPATION

The meeting was attended by 27 participants comprising of twelve (12) AWFISHNET Bureau member countries as follows: Algeria, Cameroun, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Cote D’Ivoire, Kenya, Madagascar, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda and Zambia; regional fisheries institutions: Fisheries Commission of the West Gulf of Guinea (FCWC), Regional Partnership for Coastal and Marine Conservation (PRCM); selected experts and Resource Persons, Facilitator, and AU-IBAR staff.

The selected rapporteurs for this meeting were Ms Hellen Moepi (South Africa), Mr Barthelemy Batieno (PRCM, Senegal) and Mrs Editrudith Lukanga (Secretary General of AWFISHNET).

III. OPENING SESSION

Dr. SHEP Helguièle, the Director of Aquaculture and Fisheries in the Ministry of Animal and Fisheries Resources in the Republic of Cote d’Ivoire facilitated the opening session.

Remarks were received from the following three institutions as follows:

a. Statement by African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network President
   Mrs. Beyene Ateba, President of the African Women Fish Processors and Traders Network (AWFISHNET) commenced her statement by welcoming participants and thanked the Government and People of Cote D’Ivoire for hosting this meeting. She provided a background of the network which was established during consultative meeting led by AU-IBAR with collaboration from NEPAD Agency/AUDA and WorldFish in April 2017, in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania. She mentioned that the aim...
of the Network is to improve collaboration between fish traders and processors in Africa as well as address issues they face. More importantly the Network is to enhance the role and visibility of women in the sector. She thanked AU-IBAR for continuous support whose goal is to professionalize the activities of the Network.

b. Welcome statement by AU-IBAR
Dr Mohamed Seisay, the Senior Fisheries Officer at the AU-IBAR provided a welcoming remark on behalf of Director of AU-IBAR, Prof Ahmed El-sawahly. He noted that the Republic of Cote D'Ivoire holds special place in the development initiatives of AU-IBAR; significantly he informed the participants that the first meeting towards the formulation of the PFRS was hosted by the Government of Cote D'Ivoire. He mentioned that the establishment of AWFISHNET was guided by the Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa (PFRS) and African Union Agenda 2063 which prioritised gender and youth policy arenas. AU-IBAR has been supporting the operationalisation of the network since its inception and commits to continue supporting. The hosting of this important AWFISHNET event demonstrates without doubt therefore the commitment and support of the Government and People of Cote D'Ivoire to AU aspirations for women as enshrined in Agenda 2063 and the PFRS. Lastly, he informed the participants that the workshop was funded by African Union member states for which he expressed gratitude on behalf of AU-IBAR.

c. Official opening statement by the Honourable Minister in charge of Animal and Fisheries Resources in the Republic of Cote D'Ivoire
The workshop was officially opened by His Excellency Mr. Moussa Dosso, The Honourable Minister in charge of Animal and Fisheries Resources in the Republic of Cote D'Ivoire. On behalf of the government of Cote D'Ivoire, the Hon. Minister thanked AU-IBAR for choosing Abidjan, the capital city as the host of this important workshop. He emphasised that His Excellency, the President of the Country, Honourable Alassane Dramane Ouattara considers the importance of women in participation of economic activities in the country. The fisheries and aquaculture sector is important for food security, employment and fight against poverty. He recognised that women work very hard in the difficult conditions with limited infrastructure and that such any activity that is conceived to ameliorate the challenges faced by women would be very much welcomed by the Government of Cote D'Ivoire. He therefore lauded the foresight of AU-IBAR in organizing a workshop to enhance the capacity of women for effective role in SME development in fisheries and aquaculture. He however underscored the point that more efforts should be dedicated to managing the fisheries and aquaculture resources in a sustainable manner.

d. The presentation on the Background and Objectives of the workshop in the context of the Policy Framework and Reform Strategy (PFRS) for fisheries and aquaculture in Africa was done by Dr Mohamed Seisay, Senior Fisheries Officer in AU-IBAR. In his presentation, he also brought the linkages between the overall objective of the current workshop and relevant provisions of the AU development frameworks Agenda 2063 and the Malabo Goals.

IV. THE MEETING

The overall technical facilitation of the meeting was coordinated by Dr Meke Soung Pierre Nolasque, Institute of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences, University of Douala at Yabassi in Cameroun. He was supported by Dr. Mohamed Seisay and Mrs. Beth Wagude (as a resource person and invited speaker). Other invited speakers for experience sharing were Mr. Barthelemy Jean Auguste Batieno (Coordinator, PRCM) and Mr Adejolu Adekunle (Fish Trade expert, FCWC)
Technical session

a. Presentation of overview of progress of AWFISHNET General Assembly and Bureau meeting; recent developments by AWFISHNET Secretariat, Mrs Editrudith Lukanga
b. Enhancing Knowledge amongst women on the best practices for fish processing technologies, trade and market development by Mrs. Beth Wagude
c. Challenges, opportunities and mechanism for enhancing capacity of women for effective participation in small-medium size enterprises development in fisheries and aquaculture sector by Dr Meke Soung Pierre Nolasque
d. FCWC: Programmes and initiatives for business skills development in fisheries and aquaculture for women by Mr Adejolu Adekunle, FCWC
e. PRCM: Gender empowerment programmes and initiatives in coastal zone management by Mr. Barthelemy Jean Auguste Batieno
f. Alignment of AWFISHNET and African Fisheries Policy Research Network by Dr Mohamed Seisay delivered on behalf of Dr. Sloans Chimatiro, President of African Fisheries Policy Research Network
g. Proposed structure of AWFISHNET Website by Mr Philippe Ouedraogo, IT Webmaster and Acting Head of Human Resource Unit of AU-IBAR.

Presentation By AWFISHNET Members from Cameroun, Congo, Kenya, Madagascar, Tanzania, Togo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Cote D’Ivoire, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia on:

a. Status of formation of National networks for women fish processors and traders; and
b. Experience sharing on lessons and best practices in fish processing technologies, trade and market development

Group work sessions

Two working groups were formed and guided by the following Terms of Reference

a. Challenges and Priority actions for improved fish processing technologies, market and trade development
b. Challenges and priority actions for strengthening women role in intra-regional fish trade
c. Challenges and priority actions for strengthening women role in SMEs development
d. Listing of number of existing fish processing SMEs in each country represented
MEETING OUTCOMES

The meeting achieved the following main outcomes:

a. Knowledge amongst AWFISHNET members on lessons and best practices in improved fish processing technologies, trade and market development enhanced
b. Challenges and opportunities affecting Women fish processor and trader SME’s in Africa identified
c. Priority actions developed for strengthening capacity of women in improved fish processing technologies, trade and market development
d. Priority actions developed for strengthening women role in intra-regional fish trade development
e. Priority actions developed for enhancing women role in SME in fisheries and aquaculture

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The workshop came up with the following set of recommendations:

a. There is a need to map/list the number of women groupings involved in fish processing and trade in each country in order to explore possibilities of assisting them to transform into SMEs
b. There is a need to develop a database of women grouping/associations involved in fish processors and trade in Africa
c. It was recognised that majority of women processors are engaged in fish smoking processing technologies which comes with a number of challenges such as deforestation, inhaling toxic gas which is also a greenhouse gas and with attendant health problems for women involved. Thus it is important to promote improved fish processing technologies, among women, that are cost effective, environmental friendly, less hazardous and avail them to the women fish processors and traders. This will also help in improving revenues derived from the sale as well contributing to reduction in the impact of climate change.

d. Since the national network for women processors and traders is large, the relevant infrastructure and communication channels (road transportation, ICT) remain a challenge. There is a need to assist women in the countries to share all the knowledge they have received on various platforms by supporting them organize national workshops.

e. There is a need to intensify efforts and lobby to the Policy Makers to undertake necessary infrastructure development (especially with regards to road transportation and communication means) in order to support national and regional fish trade
f. The Bureau appreciated efforts by AU-IBAR in building the capacities of Network members in different aspects of their businesses, and requested for continuous training in technology advancement in order to be able to transit from traditional to modern processing facilities

h. The meeting recognised the importance of women fish processors and traders participating in relevant decision making platforms. The meeting urged AWFISHNET Bureau and their members to develop an appropriate advocacy mechanism in the different countries to influence decision making process and underscored the need for Women to endeavour to take up leadership position.

i. AWFISHNET should endeavour to mobilise resources to facilitate the members to organize exchange programmes, study tours amongst themselves (and beyond) to be able to improve their business operations. This could be achieved through introducing membership fees and other mechanisms.

j. It was highlighted that Networking is very important and AWFISHNET should play an active role of connecting traders with markets, market information and specific requirements as well as creating linkages between AWFISHNET and other relevant regional and continental institutions.
k. AWFISHNET Bureau should urge members to continue establishing and/or strengthen platforms at national platforms within the framework of AWFISHNET (and creating linkages with other existing networks)

WAY FORWARD

a. The outcomes of this meeting should be disseminated among network members
b. There is a need for AU-IBAR to continue to give its full support to AWFishNet until the network is well established and fully operational
c. AU-IBAR is planning a workshop on African Policy Research Network platform. This provides an opportunity for AWFISHNET to showcase their activities and progress.

CLOSING OF THE MEETING

The vote of thanks was given by Secretary General of AWFISHNET, Mrs Editrudith Lukanga. Closing remarks were given by the President of AWFISHNET, Mrs Beyene Ateba; Dr. Mohamed Seisay on behalf of AU-IBAR Director. The meeting was officially closed by the Director of Aquaculture and Fisheries, Dr. SHEP Helguilè in the Republic of Cote d’Ivoire on behalf of H.E. the Hon Minister in charge of Animal and Fisheries Resources in Cote D’Ivoire.