Fisheries and Safety for Fishermen in ATLAFCO zone

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In the fishing sector, numerous regulations related to vessel safety and to work safety have been implemented over the last few years.

However, despite positive trends, sea fishing remains one of the most dangerous and hardest occupations.

The people affected by accidents at sea are often among the poorest in society.

FAO has already launched a global safety at sea project for small-scale fisheries in developing countries.

Its overall objective is to improve the livelihoods of small-scale fishing communities by decreasing the number of accidents at sea and their effects.
Safety for fishermen: the way forward

- The people affected by accidents at sea are often among the poorest in society.
- Safety at sea is always an integrated part of fisheries management; every change within a fisheries management system will affect safety for fishermen in some way.
- Training and awareness raising are very often the most effective way of improving safety for fishermen, yet preparation should involve children and other villagers as well as fishermen.
- The design, quality and equipment of fishing vessels are extremely important and very often missing.
- Search and rescue (SAR) services are often lacking in developing countries due to their high costs.
The West African project component

The planned output from the West African project component was:

- Strengthened \textit{national and regional capabilities} and \textit{capacities for implementing safety at sea programs} and \textit{raised awareness} of current problems identified among government officials.

- \textit{Improved system in place for reporting and analyzing accidents involving small scale fishermen.}
Fisheries activities risks in ATLAFCO zone

- In ATLAFCO region, 80% of the artisanal fleet is non-motorized.

- The yearly fatality rate for fishermen is about ten times higher than in the developed countries (around 1,000 per 100,000).

- Most of the countries have opened their EEZ to foreign industrial fleets.

- Although a 3-12 nautical mile coastal zone is reserved for artisanal fishers, keeping the industrial vessels out of these waters poses problems for the local MCS services.
The problems encountered in safety at sea by fishermen in ATLAFCO zone countries, are also quite different from those encountered in developed ones.

The main differences can be listed as follows:

- The fishing fleet consists mainly of small, simple and often non-motorized vessels, (including canoes, and pirogues), with limited equipment for navigation, communication and safety.

- There are not enough technically trained personnel to serve as crew members, trainers or inspectors.

- SAR can be very costly and needs to be organized in the most rational way possible in each area. This may call for cooperation between different governmental agencies, e.g. those organizing Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) and Safety at Sea.

- The infrastructure necessary for enforcement of laws and regulations is lacking in many of these countries, not least where the fishing communities are dispersed along the shore, harbor facilities are limited and beach landing is common.

- The basic perception of the value of human life is culturally determined.
ATLAFCO and the Safety issues

- Maritime safety can be governed through regulatory, economic or informative guidance based policy instruments.
- Maritime safety is enhanced by all these types of instrument, although most prominently through regulatory instruments.
- ATLAFCO’s Action Plan for the 2019-2020 period articulated around the following five strategic axes:
  - Conservation and sustainable use of fisheries resources;
  - Improving the performance of the sector;
  - Promotion of intra-regional trade of fishery products;
  - Strengthening ATLAFCO’ group within international fisheries bodies;
  - Maritime safety and security
The continuous work towards improving safety for fishermen can be illustrated in the safety management cycle.

The cycle aims to provide information from the accidents at sea reporting system to input into the safety management system in order to improve safety for fishermen.

It also reflects the important holistic approach, involving all the stakeholders.

The cycle has four sections:

- **Proactive** (Before the accident):
  - Mitigation
  - Preparedness

- **Reactive** (After the accident):
  - Relief
  - Rehabilitation
Fishermen with poor communications and safety equipment are one of the main reasons for search and rescue (SAR) call-outs off the coasts of ATLAFCO zone.

It is agreed that the dangers identified were not just a SAR issue but also required a community approach to encourage a safety culture.

The increased possibility of a mass rescue operation being required highlights the need for SAR organizations to develop plans to manage this risk.
The SAR system is important in the maritime safety system:

- The maritime SAR system has long been served as the last shackle of the maritime safety chain since it came into being.

- Without which maritime activities are to be exposed to various dangers and lack a sense of safety.
Conclusions

- It is important to have a **good picture of accidents at sea**, collecting data and analyzing the causes of accidents in order to improve **safety for fishermen**

- Safety at sea is always—directly and indirectly—an integrated part of fisheries management

- Every change within a fisheries management system will affect **safety for fishermen** in some way

- Training and awareness raising are very often the most effective way of improving **safety for fishermen**

- They should not only concentrate on **fishermen**, but also involve **women, children and other villagers**

- The design, quality and equipment of fishing vessels are extremely important and very often missing
Search and rescue (SAR) services are normally functional in developed countries, but often lacking in developing countries.

SAR operations are normally very costly and countries cannot afford to have them.

Activities related to fishermen safety can be implemented through various safety at sea projects and should always be part of any project related to:
- fisheries livelihoods,
- Coastal management,
- sustainable coastal development,
- coastal vulnerability,
- fisheries management,
- the ecosystems approach to fisheries
- climate change

Harmonize and materialize risk management -national and regional level - strategic and operational level

No serious Accident at sea
The chain of sub-regional African MRCCs

- Complete search and rescue cover around Africa’s coast was secured on 3 March 2011 with the signing, multi-lateral co-operative agreement on the North and West African sub-regional Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC), which establishes a new Morocco MRCC.

- The Morocco sub-regional MRCC, located at Bouznika, a seaside area 20 Km from Rabat, joined those already commissioned in:
  - Cape Town, South Africa (2007)
  - Monrovia, Liberia (2009)

- Thus completing the final link in the chain of sub-regional African MRCCs, each with its own network of associated sub-centers.
The majority of lives lost at sea are concerned with fishing activity, the main provider of employment and the poorest segment of all maritime activities.

The best way to reduce these losses is to strengthen safety among the fishing fleet by improving:
- navigation conditions
- ship safety
- fishermen's working practices
- training and awareness
- Enhanced cooperation
“Do you think safety is expensive? Try an accident!”

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