



MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON FISHERIES COOPERATION AMONG AFRICAN COUNTRIES
BORDERING THE ATLANTIC OCEAN
(ATLAFCO)

EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

WORKSHOP

"TO ACCELERATE THE ELIMINATION OF CHILD LABOR IN THE FISHING SECTOR IN
AFRICA"

CONCEPT NOTE

2024 – (MOROCCO)

2024

Workshop “ To accelerate the elimination of child labor in the fisheries sector in Africa ”

Context :

The fisheries sector, as an economic pillar for many communities in Africa, is of critical importance to the livelihood and well-being of thousands of families. Rivers, lakes and coasts abound in aquatic resources, providing a vital source of food, income and livelihoods. However, this economic dependence on fishing exposes these communities to complex and often overlooked challenges related to children's participation in this sector.

The reality of child labor in fisheries highlights the profound impact of this activity on the daily lives of these young people. Although fishery is a central part of economic life, it can also lead to increased vulnerability of children, exposing them to precarious working conditions, health risks and educational barriers. These challenges raise crucial questions regarding the protection of children's human rights and the need to build a sustainable future for these communities.

Children's participation in the fisheries sector is often rooted in difficult economic realities. Families often rely heavily on income generated from fisheries to meet their basic needs, and this dependence can lead to the need for children to actively contribute to these activities. Economic pressures, combined with limited access to other opportunities, create a context where child labor becomes a pragmatic, although not ideal, solution.

The protection of children's rights in this context then becomes an essential challenge. It is imperative to reconcile economic necessity with the responsibility to guarantee a safe and conducive environment for the development of children. The question of the sustainability of these communities dependent on fishing also arises acutely. Practices that compromise the well-being of children also risk compromising the long-term social and economic stability of these regions.

Thus, understanding these complex dynamics in the fisheries sector in Africa requires a holistic approach. Implementing policies and practices that balance economic necessity with respect for children's rights is essential. Initiatives aimed at diversifying sources of income, improving access to education and raising awareness among communities of the importance of protecting their children are key elements in building a sustainable and balanced future for these communities.

Causes of Child Labor in Fisheries :

Poverty, as a driving force, puts crushing pressure on many families in Africa, often forcing them to make difficult decisions to secure their daily livelihood. When financial resources are limited and alternative employment prospects are rare, families frequently turn to the fishery sector as a way to supplement their income. This difficult reality highlights the complex and often desperate nature of the choices these communities face.

Lack of access to education significantly aggravates this situation. In many regions, barriers to education, such as the lack of adequate schools, the costs associated with

education, and sometimes the social norms prevalent in certain communities, make education a luxury that is difficult to afford for many children. This deprivation of education creates a vicious circle where opportunities to improve living conditions are limited, because access to education is often the essential lever to break the cycle of poverty.

Economic pressures exacerbate this dynamic by forcing families to make pragmatic decisions to survive on a daily basis. In this context, the fisheries sector appears to be an immediate solution, offering regular income opportunities, even if this sometimes means involving children in work. Children thus become essential actors in contributing to family livelihoods, a situation often accepted out of necessity rather than choice.

However, this pragmatic solution has long-term consequences. Depriving children of a formal education limits their future opportunities and perpetuates the cycle of poverty in the community. Lack of education can also make them more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, creating a vicious cycle that is difficult to break without targeted interventions.

To break this vicious cycle, holistic approaches are needed. This includes establishing accessible education programs, raising awareness in communities about the importance of education, as well as creating alternative economic opportunities for families. It is imperative to adopt a balanced approach that simultaneously addresses educational and economic aspects in order to break the link between poverty and child labor in the fishing sector, thereby paving the way for a brighter future for these communities.

Consequences on Children and Society :

The consequences of child labor in fisheries are multidimensional. On an individual level, this compromises children's health, education and psychosocial development. On a societal level, this can contribute to the perpetuation of the cycle of poverty, resulting in a less educated and more vulnerable population.

Mitigation Approaches :

To address the complex problem of child labor in the fisheries sector in Africa, integrated and coherent measures are essential. These measures must encompass various aspects of the problem and address the deep roots that fuel it.

First, it is imperative to strengthen and implement strict national and international regulations to prohibit child labor in the fisheries sector. This requires close collaboration between governments, international agencies and local stakeholders. Strengthening existing laws, or creating new legislation where they are lacking, must be supported by effective enforcement mechanisms. This will ensure that companies and individuals involved in child labor are held accountable for their actions. Harmonizing regulations internationally is also crucial to prevent exploitative practices that could simply move from one region to another.

Alongside strict regulations, initiatives to improve access to education are of paramount importance. This includes the creation and financial support of schools

adapted to local needs, the provision of educational materials, and the establishment of incentive programs to encourage school attendance. It is essential to recognize that education is a powerful tool to break the cycle of poverty and empower future generations. Investing in education provides children with the opportunity to develop their skills and aspire to opportunities that go beyond immediate economic constraints.

Community awareness is another essential part of this integrated approach. Informing families about the harmful consequences of child labor and the alternatives available can change mentalities. Awareness campaigns can also play a crucial role in highlighting children's rights and promoting a culture where education is valued alongside work. Actively involving community members in these campaigns strengthens the sense of ownership and commitment to more ethical practices.

Finally, providing support to vulnerable families is essential. This can take the form of economic development programs aimed at diversifying family income sources, thereby reducing the pressure on children to work. Social protection initiatives, such as social safety nets, can also play a crucial role in providing direct financial support to the poorest families.

By combining these different approaches, it is possible to create positive momentum towards the elimination of child labor in the fisheries sector in Africa. This integrated approach recognizes the complexity of the problem and strives to address its multi-faceted to ensure lasting change within these vulnerable communities.

In this sense, ATLAFCO is organizing a workshop dedicated to this issue entitled: “ *To accelerate the elimination of child labor in the fishing sector in Africa*”

The objective of this workshop is to bring together representatives of member countries, international and regional organizations, NGOs, civil society as well as experts and resource people to debate in a rich and relevant manner on the means of combating child labor and promote decent work in supply chains, particularly in Africa, by adopting a systemic approach to eliminate child labor at its roots by strengthening existing mechanisms at several levels of governance including:

1. Improving awareness-raising activities and communication products intended for stakeholders in the fisheries sector for better governance;
2. Capacity building and learning opportunities for fisheries stakeholders on the prevention of child labor and the promotion of youth employment;
3. The development of information and guidance documents for selected fishery stakeholders in order to reinforce good practices in the fight against child labor;
4. The organization of regional consultations between agricultural stakeholders on the theme of child labor in fisheries;
6. The development of knowledge products on specific themes related to child labor in the fishing sector.

By implementing this action commitment, more stakeholders in the fisheries and aquaculture sector will be aware, informed, able and committed to taking advantage of opportunities to contribute to the reduction of child labor in fisheries .

The workshop will take place around the following sessions:

Session I: Overview of the prevalence of child labor in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors in Africa

The prevalence of child labor in Africa has historically been high, hovering around 20% of all child labor worldwide. However, according to the latest data, sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the highest prevalence of child labor and the largest number of working children, at 23.9% or 86.6 million children. children aged 5 to 17.

Indeed, there are now more children working in sub-Saharan Africa than in the rest of the world combined. It is obvious that the goals on child labor will not be met without a breakthrough in this region

Session II: Causes, characteristics and consequences of child labor in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors

Although many challenges can be attributed to root causes such as poverty, socio-cultural factors and lack of awareness about this issue, these root causes are complex and require all available resources from governments, civil society and the private sector to tackle child labor in the fisheries sector

Session III: International and regional efforts and initiatives to combat child labor in the fisheries and aquaculture sector

- Joint FAO and ILO guidance for combating child labor in the fisheries and aquaculture sector
- The International Year for the Elimination of Child Labor, 2021
- The African Union's commitment to eradicate child labor

Session IV: State of play of national legislation in ATLAFCO countries in the fight against child labor in the fisheries and aquaculture sector

Governments are at the forefront of ending child labor in agriculture, starting with strengthening social protection. By protecting households from extreme poverty, parents could refrain from sending their children to work for economic reasons and, in doing so, increase children's chances of continuing their educational journey (OHCHR, 2022).

Session V: Towards promoting visibility of children's rights at all levels of society

Addressing child labor in Africa's fisheries sector is a complex undertaking that requires close and coordinated collaboration among various stakeholders. Each of these parties has a crucial role to play in ensuring meaningful and lasting change.

Governments occupy a central position in this struggle. They are responsible for developing, implementing and enforcing effective policies that prohibit child labor in the fisheries sector. It also involves creating monitoring and sanctioning mechanisms

to ensure compliance. Governments also have a crucial role in promoting education by facilitating access to quality educational programs and providing incentives to encourage children's schooling.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a vital role as defenders of children's rights and as drivers of social change. NGOs can provide support on the ground by identifying cases of child labor, providing community awareness services and advocating in favor of more robust policies at the national and international level. Their ability to mobilize resources and operate in an agile manner allows them to quickly respond to the specific needs of affected communities.

Businesses also have an important responsibility in combating child labor. This starts with implementing ethical business practices that reject all forms of child labor in their supply chains. Businesses can also contribute financially to educational and social development initiatives in the communities where they operate, creating a long-term positive impact.

Unions can play a key role in defending the rights of workers, including children. They can work in partnership with businesses to ensure that working conditions meet ethical and legal standards. Unions can also advocate for fair wages and better working conditions, reducing economic pressure on families that can lead to child labor.

Finally, the involvement of local communities is fundamental. Communities are often best placed to understand local dynamics, specific challenges and solutions adapted to their context. Empowering communities through awareness, education and economic development programs strengthens their capacity to protect their children and reject child labor as an accepted social norm.

In short, the fight against child labor in the fisheries sector in Africa requires harmonious and coherent collaboration between governments, NGOs, businesses, unions and local communities. Each of these actors has a distinct but interconnected role, and it is by joining forces that they can create sustainable solutions adapted to each context.

Conclusion :

In conclusion, the adoption of integrated approaches is imperative to make significant progress in combating child labor in the fisheries sector in Africa. This need arises from the inherent complexity of this problem, which is intrinsically linked to deeply rooted socio-economic, educational and cultural factors. By combining various strategies, it becomes possible to address these multiple dimensions and build a more promising future for children and affected communities.

The integrated approach starts with establishing and strengthening strong legal frameworks, both nationally and internationally, aimed at strictly prohibiting child labor in the fisheries sector. However, regulation alone is not enough. It is essential to complement these measures with initiatives focused on strengthening education systems. Access to quality education, adapted to local needs, becomes a powerful weapon to break the cycle of poverty and child labor. This not only allows children to

develop their skills, but also changes the outlook of the entire community by providing broader horizons.

Community awareness plays a crucial role in this integrated approach. It is imperative to change mentalities and challenge social norms that accept child labor as an inevitable practice. Targeted awareness campaigns can shed light on the harmful consequences of this practice, mobilize local support and strengthen community resistance against child labor.

At the same time, support programs for vulnerable families, focused on economic development and the creation of alternatives to income-generating activities involving children, are essential. These initiatives aim to reduce economic pressure on families, freeing them from the need to resort to child labor to support themselves.