



COMMISSION SOUS-RÉGIONALE DES PÊCHES
SUB-REGIONAL FISHERIES COMMISSION



SRFC. Forty Years of Cooperation on Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture



Edition

Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC)
www.spcsrp.org

Responsible for publication

Dr Khallahi BRAHIM, Permanent Secretary of the SRFC

Editorial & Scientific Committee

Abdou Khadir DIAKHATÉ, in charge of HPL of the SRFC
Mouhamadou Makhtar SECK, Head of Finance & Accounting Dept, SRFC
Mika DIOP, Consultant SRFC
Maria ANDRADE, Bilingual Secretary, SRFC
Patrice BREHMER, Scientific Adviser of the Permanent Secretary, SRFC

With the kind contribution of

Yacine DIOP Ancienne Responsable des Ressources Humaines
Makane NDIAYE, Consultant Suivi, Contrôle et Surveillance des pêches
Demba Amadou KANE, ex-Chargé du Projet PRAO
Hamady DIOP, ex-Chef du Département Recherche et Système d'Information des pêches
Babacar BA, ex-Chef du Département Suivi, Contrôle et Surveillance des pêches

Graphics

Larochette Dakar - Comptoir Graphique

Photographs

© CSRP, © IRD

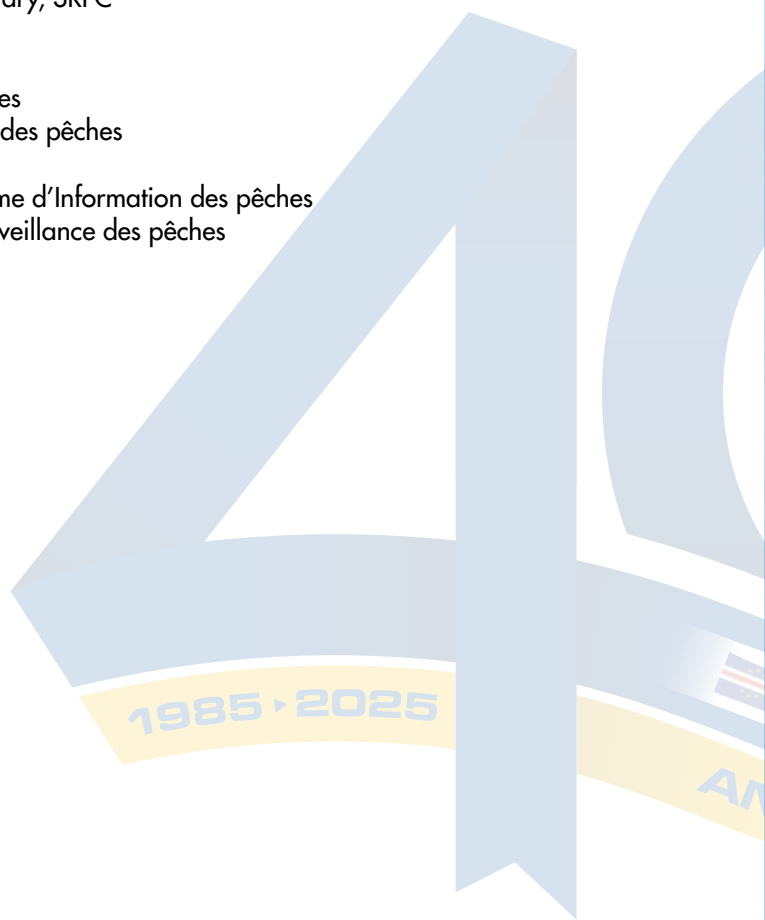
Printing

Larochette Dakar, Dakar, Sénégal

Credits and rights

© CSRP, 2025. All rights reserved.

Reproduction, even partial, of texts, maps and illustrations is prohibited without prior authorization from the publisher.
For any requests for use or reproduction, please contact spcsrp@spcsrp.org



SUMMARY

ABBREVIATIONS

PREAMBLE

I. THE SRFC - FOUR DECADES OF FISHERIES COOPERATION IN WEST AFRICA

I.1. CREATION OF THE SRFC: GENESIS AND EVOLUTION OF A COMMON VISION	6
I.2. OBJECTIVES AND MISSION: A MANDATE FOR SUSTAINABLE FISHING	7
I.3. SRFC ZONE: A RICH AND STRATEGIC MARITIME SPACE	7
I.4. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE: EFFECTIVE AND INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE	8
I.5. ESTABLISHED REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION	9

II. A DYNAMIC PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES

II.1. FORTY YEARS OF COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIPS ON SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES	11
II.2. PROJECTS AND THEIR IMPACTS	11

III. MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS AND SUCCESSES

III.1. HARMONIZATION OF POLICIES AND LEGISLATION	18
III.2. SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND FISHERIES MANAGEMENT	20
III.3. FISHERIES MONITORING, CONTROL AND SURVEILLANCE	22

IV. STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS: 40 YEARS OF COMMITMENT, A RENEWED COURSE FOR THE FUTURE

IV.1. FOUNDATIONS LAID	24
IV.2. TOWARDS STRUCTURED SUB-REGIONAL GOVERNANCE	
IV.3. INTEGRATION OF SCIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY	
IV.4. A NEW COURSE FOR 2025–2029	
IV.5. A PATH OF CONTINUOUS CONSOLIDATION AND ADAPTATION	

ABBREVIATIONS

ADEPA: West African Association for the Development of Artisanal Fishing

FDA: French Development Agency

AIS: Automatic Identification System

PSMA: Port State Measures Agreement

MPA: Marine Protected Area

AU-IBAR: African Union Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources

AWA: Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries and Marine Environment Management in West African Waters Project

BBI: Blue Belt Initiative

CAOPA: African Confederation of Professional Organizations of African Artisanal Fisheries

CC: Coordinating Committee of the SRFC

ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States

CMCS: Convention on the Monitoring, Control and Surveillance of Fishing Activities???

CM: Conference of Ministers of the SRFC

CMA: Convention on Minimum Conditions of Access

CNSHB: National Center for Fisheries Science of Boussoira, Guinea

ATLAFCO: Ministerial Conference on Fisheries Cooperation between African States Bordering the Atlantic Ocean

CSE: Ecological Monitoring Center

SRFC: Subregional Fisheries Commission

DPSP: Directorate of Fisheries Protection and Surveillance

DRSI: Research and Information Systems Department

EAMME: Ecosystem Approach to the Management of Fisheries and the Marine Environment

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

GEF: Global Environment Facility

FIBA: International Banc d'Arguin Foundation

GOWAMER: Governance, marine resource management policy and poverty reduction in the ecoregion WAMER

WG: Working Group

HPL: Harmonization of Policies and Legislation

ICAWA: International Conference AWA

IMBO: Institute of Marine Biology and Oceanography, Sierra Leone

IMROP: Mauritanian Institute of Oceanographic and Fisheries Research, Mauritania

INIPO: National Institute of Research, Survey and Oceanography, Guinea-Bissau

IUU: Illegal, Unreported, Unregulated

DRI: Development Research Institute (ex-Orstom)

ISRA/CRODT : Centre de Recherches Océanographiques de Dakar Thiaroye, Sénégal

MFWR/FD: Fisheries Department, Gambie

NEPAD: New Partnership for Africa's Development

SDG: Sustainable Development Goals

PAN: National Action Plan

PAR: Regional Action Plan

PESCAO: Project Improving Regional Fisheries Governance in West Africa

PNBA: Parc National du Banc d'Arguin

PRAO/WARFP: West Africa Regional Fisheries Program

SP: Strategic Plan

PSRA-Requins: Sub-Regional Shark Action Plan

MCR: Marine Coastal Resources

MCS: Monitor Control & Surveillance

ITLOS: International Tribunal of the Law of the Sea

TMT: Trygg Mat Tracking

AU: African Union

UBC: University of British Columbia

UN: United Nations

VMS: Vessel Monitoring System

EEZ: Exclusive Economic Zone

PREAMBLE

Dr Khallahi BRAHIM
Permanent Secretary
of the SRFC



The FAO's 2024 State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture report highlights slow but steady growth in production, reaching 223 million tonnes in 2022. For the first time, aquaculture production surpassed that of capture fisheries, reaching 131 million tonnes. This trend reflects a major structural shift in the global supply of aquatic products.

In Africa, combined fisheries and aquaculture production accounted for approximately six per cent of the global total. However, this estimate masks a more complex reality. Indeed, FAO statistics often prioritize recording catches by fleet nationality to the detriment of considering the marine areas where these catches are made. Thus, the logic of the tool prioritising the primary over the territorial contribution contributes to underestimating the actual contribution of African waters—and particularly West African waters—to global fisheries production.

The sector's growth potential in our sub-region remains considerable, both due to the shortfalls associated with improved fisheries governance and the vast prospects offered by largely untapped aquaculture development. The SRFC member countries form a region historically rich in marine resources with underutilized aquaculture potential. The fisheries and aquaculture sector can produce more to better, serve the sustainable development of our shared space. However, this potential faces numerous threats. Fleet overcapacity, accompanied by increasing overfishing, has led to a worrying decline in the stocks of many key species, such as sardinella. Transboundary pelagic and demersal resources constitute a renewable resource for our fellow citizens, provided they are well managed. They are also at the heart of our culture and food security while representing an important source of foreign currency through exports, which should be diversified and further enhanced through the development of processed products with higher added value.

Climate change, which has become an unavoidable reality, disrupts not only planning but also the long-term sustainable management and governance of fisheries due to growing uncertainty and a lack of reliable information on what? At the same time, pollution and anthropogenic pressures on coastlines are accelerating the degradation of marine and coastal ecosystems. The loss or alteration of critical marine? habitats is affecting ecosystem productivity. The decline in the abundance of fisheries resources is now observed in all our Member States, with direct consequences for nutritional security, food sovereignty, and biodiversity. Added to this is the persistent expansion of illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, which causes significant economic losses, compromises sustainable management efforts, weakens ecosystems, and undermines progress towards equitable and responsible governance of the fisheries sector.

In a world increasingly structured around regional blocs, it is more necessary than ever for our member states to join forces, especially since our shared marine ecosystem has common biological, ecological, economic, sociocultural, and physical dynamics. Faced with shared challenges, only a collective and united approach will overcome the issues hindering the sustainable development of fisheries and aquaculture in our region.

It was with this in mind that the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC) was established 40 years ago to strengthen the inter-state cooperation, harmonise fisheries policies, promote scientific research, and establish concerted mechanisms for more sustainable, equitable, and responsible management of marine resources for the benefit of current and future generations in the region we serve.

I. THE SRFC - FOUR DECADES OF FISHERIES COOPERATION IN WEST AFRICA



I.1. CREATION OF THE SRFC: GENESIS AND EVOLUTION OF A COMMON VISION

I.1.1. Beginnings based on a desire to find a common response to the major challenges of the sub-region

The West African coasts are alternately bathed by the Canary Current, a cold current coming from the north, and the subtropical Guinea Current, a warm current coming from the South. In this area, we find species with both temperate and tropical affinities. The area is also known for these cold-water upwelling phenomena, which cause a regular enrichment of surface waters. West African ocean waters, both coastal and marine, have high productivity, supporting significant biological diversity and an abundance of fishery resources of high economic value, which are highly sought after and sometimes disputed.

The Fisheries sector plays a leading economic and social role in the sub-region and is one of the most dynamic economic sectors. The sector's strong contribution to macroeconomic balances, intrinsic growth potential, and contribution to employment and food security make it a priority sector in the various national policies of the sub-region. However, the fisheries sector continues to face major challenges, including the effects of global change, the erosion of biodiversity, the expansion of illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, and the growth of fishing capacity, all of which affect not

only the West African member states but also countries beyond the region.

To address many of these challenges, five countries in the sub-region met in Dakar in October 1976 to engage in discussions aimed at identifying an appropriate joint response. Subsequently, Cabo Verde, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, and Senegal, decided to create the SRFC, an intergovernmental organization for fisheries cooperation, on March 29, 1985, in Dakar. The initiative aimed to pool resources to collectively address challenges the sector faces and which know no borders. The Republic of Guinea joined the SRFC in 1986, followed by Sierra Leone in 2004, bringing the number of member states to seven.

I.1.2. A gradual institutional evolution

In its early days, the SRFC underwent a phase of gradual structuring, during which Senegal managed the organisation, notably through the appointment of a Permanent Secretary. This configuration, based on close coordination, helped lay the functional foundations of the Commission while prefiguring its future regional anchoring. A major turning point occurred in 1992 during a ministerial meeting held in Mauritania, where the Member States agreed to provide the SRFC with an autonomous budget funded by annual contributions. This decisive step towards financial autonomy was realised the following year in Conakry, Guinea. Indeed, in 1993, under the Presidency of Cabo Verde,

the organizational structure of the SRFC was further consolidated. It was at this time that the position of Deputy Permanent Secretary was created, and a four-year term was formally established for the Permanent Secretary. In the same spirit, a system of differentiated financial contributions was implemented, considering the respective economic capacities of each Member State. This period marked an important transition toward a more institutionalised, collective, and sustainable governance of SRFC based on the principles of solidarity and co-responsibility.

Over the decades, the SRFC has demonstrated adaptability by adjusting its structure and operating methods to meet the changing challenges of the fisheries sector while remaining faithful to its primary mission of sub-regional cooperation. This dynamic of evolution led to a major institutional reform in 2009, with the establishment of three technical departments: Harmonisation of Fisheries Policies and Legislation; Research and Information Systems; and Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance of Fisheries Management. This new organization aimed to strengthen internal expertise and better structure the SRFC's action around its operational priorities. However, this ambitious reform encountered recurring financial constraints, which limited its full implementation. Aware of the need to readjust resources to ambitions, the Conference of Ministers in its ordinary session in Freetown in 2018 and extraordinary session in Praia in 2019, instructed the Permanent Secretary «to commission an organizational and financial audit of the SRFC». This study, as validated by the 21st ordinary session of the Conference of Ministers held in Dakar in 2023, had a dual objective: to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of internal operations while refocusing the SRFC's missions on a realistic scope aligned with the organisation's actual financial capacities. This desire for in-depth reform demonstrates the institutional maturity of the SRFC, which is capable of questioning and reinventing itself when circumstances arise, consistently at the service of Member States and the sustainable governance of shared fisheries resources.

I.2. OBJECTIVES AND MISSION

I.2.1. A vision focused on regional cooperation

The SRFC aims to strengthen cooperation among its member states to promote better sub-regional integration through the long-term harmonisation of policies and legislation on the preservation, conservation, and sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources.

I.2.2. Clearly defined strategic missions

At the heart of its work, the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission is committed to strengthening fisheries cooperation between its seven member states: Cabo Verde, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal and Sierra Leone. This regional collaboration approach aims to create sustainable synergies, particularly by enabling countries that have developed successful fisheries policies to share their experiences, allowing the entire sub-region to benefit from their achievements.

To achieve this objective, the SRFC has adopted a set of strategic missions that were clearly defined from its early years and have been consolidated over time. It thus works to harmonise policies for the preservation, conservation, and sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources, a crucial condition for effective governance in a shared maritime space. It also promotes sub-regional integration by strengthening collaboration between member states to promote the well-being of populations and food sovereignty.

In continental and international forums, the SRFC represents the collective voice of its members by promoting common strategies, thereby strengthening their diplomatic influence and capacity. Furthermore, it actively supports the implementation of sustainable fisheries management policies, ensuring that the interests of coastal communities are reconciled with conservation imperatives.

Aware of the importance of transparency and regulatory compliance, the Commission is also committed to developing effective monitoring, control, and surveillance systems, a cornerstone of the fight against illegal fishing. Hence, it plays a central role in collaborative research on the development of effective information systems since shared knowledge is the foundation for the effective and equitable management of marine resources.

I.3. SRFC ZONE: A RICH AND STRATEGIC MARITIME SPACE

I.3.1. A sub-region with exceptional marine resources

The geographical area of the SRFC benefits from exceptional hydrological and ecological conditions, notably the upwelling phenomenon in the North and continental inputs in the South, which result in one of

the highest marine productivity in the world.

The SRFC's coverage area encompasses the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of the Member States with a coastline of approximately 3,500 kilometres along the North Atlantic Ocean covering more than 4 million square kilometres. This maritime area, with its unique wealth of fisheries, constitutes a vital natural heritage for the populations of the sub-region. The fisheries resources are varied and mainly include pelagic (large and small pelagic) and demersal resources, such as cephalopods (e.g., octopus, cuttlefish, squid), crustaceans (e.g., shrimp, lobster, crab), and fish (e.g., thiof, sea bream) of high commercial value.

I.3.2. Major socioeconomic importance and key role in food security

The SRFC region is home to a population of approximately 50 million, with 70% residing in the coastal zone and comprising nearly one million fishermen. With an average consumption estimated at 20 kg of fish per capita per year, fisheries resources constitute a fundamental pillar of food security of member states as well as neighbouring landlocked countries such as Mali and Burkina Faso.

The annual catches from marine fisheries in SRFC region is estimated at 2 million tonnes, 80% of which is composed of small pelagic fish (e.g., sardinella, horse mackerel, and sardines). These species are the most widely consumed in the subregion and play a crucial role in food security nutritional well-being of West African populations by providing 48% of the daily

animal protein consumed by the population.

I.3.3. A sector generating jobs and income

The fishing sector, which is primarily artisanal in the SRFC region, makes a significant contribution to poverty alleviation in member states. The fishing carried out by approximately 50,000 canoes and more than 1,000 domestic and foreign industrial fishing vessels generates nearly one million direct and indirect jobs. In fact, fishing is an economic pillar for SRFC member states as it provides significant foreign exchange from exports to international markets. The annual value of catches is estimated to be 930 billion CFA francs (XOF) (or USD 1.5 billion), illustrating the sector's considerable economic importance in the subregion.

I.4. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The SRFC has three governing bodies to ensure its proper functioning and facilitate the achievement of its objectives.

I.4.1. The Conference of Ministers

The Conference of Ministers, the highest decision-making body, brings together the ministers responsible for fisheries from the seven member states. It defines the organization's political and strategic directions, approves work plans and budgets, and makes major decisions regarding its operations. The current Presidency of the Conference of Ministers is a two year term held in rotation by each of the ministers responsible for fisheries of SRFC member states following the





alphabetical order states. The Conference of Ministers meets in ordinary sessions every two years and in extraordinary sessions as needed.

1.4.2. The Coordinating Committee

Composed of the Directors of Fisheries or any other Expert designated by the Member States, the SRFC Coordinating Committee is the technical advisory body of the Conference of Ministers. It collaborates with the Permanent Secretariat in organizing the meetings of the Conference of Ministers, examines technical issues and makes recommendations to the Conference of Ministers. This committee plays a decisive role in the development and monitoring of the Commission's programs and projects. It meets at least once a year in ordinary sessions and as needed in extraordinary sessions. The current Presidency is held by the Director of Fisheries or any other Expert designated by the Member State holding the Presidency of the Conference of Ministers.

1.4.3. The Permanent Secretariat

Based in Dakar, Senegal, the Permanent Secretariat is the executive body of the SRFC. It is headed by a Permanent Secretary appointed for a four-year non-renewable term. The Permanent Secretariat is responsible of the day-to-day management of the organisation, implementation of the decisions of the Conference of Ministers, and execution of the SRFC's work plans, programs, and projects. Following the organisational reform adopted in 2023, the structure of the Permanent Secretariat has been optimised to enhance its effectiveness and efficiency. This reorganisation has enabled the institution to adapt to current challenges while maintaining its ability to fulfil its fundamental mission of strengthening regional fisheries cooperation.



For the last 40 years, the SRFC has embodied the common desire of its member states to preserve their fisheries resources and promote sustainable fishing for the benefit of present and future generations.

1.5 SRFC REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

Over the decades, the SRFC has established itself as a key player in fisheries cooperation in West Africa. Created by the 1985 Convention, the regional commission has consolidated its legal status as a recognized legal entity with a comprehensive body of policies and procedures covering, internal operations, HR administration, accounting, and finance. This enhanced legal and administrative structure gives the Commission the legitimacy it needs to operate effectively in a complex regional and international environment.

Recognised for its expertise and ability to unite the efforts of member states around common challenges, the SRFC has distinguished itself by structuring partnerships with organisations such as ECOWAS, the African Union, the FAO, and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS). The latter's successful referral constitutes a historic precedent for an international organization, demonstrating its technical and legal stature.

Aware of the strategic importance of its visibility, the SRFC has also strengthened its institutional



communications. It has developed its own graphic identity and website (<https://spcsrp.org>) and is active on social media. Documentary films, brochures, and awareness-raising materials complement this outreach effort, aiming to raise awareness of sub-regional fisheries issues among the general public, decision-makers, and international partners. Finally, two periodic publications—a bimonthly newsletter and a quarterly FlashNews—provide regular monitoring of the Commission's activities.

The international recognition along with the rigour and relevance of the actions carried out by SRFC have positioned it as a benchmark organization in the governance of marine resources in West Africa.



II. DYNAMIC PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES

II.1. FORTY YEARS OF COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIPS ON SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES

The SRFC has established diverse partnerships to ensure success of its initiatives. This is why it has opened up to broad collaboration and a solid network of partnerships at the sub-regional, regional, continental and international levels, woven around shared values and common objectives. This type of partnership allows for the development of high-impact programs and projects that benefit the fisheries sector in the entire sub-region.



A dynamic partnership at the heart of the action

The SRFC works closely with its development partners to design, pilot, and implement ambitious and innovative projects that meet the expectations of our member states. These collaborations help strengthen the capacities of member states, enhance fisheries governance, promote marine scientific research, and support resilience in the face of global environmental and climate challenges.

Sub-regional cooperation

The SRFC actively works to consolidate cooperation between its member states by promoting concerted and equitable management of shared resources. It acts as a catalyst for dialogue, policy harmonisation, and networking among fisheries administrations, surveillance services, and oceanographic and fisheries research centres, thereby contributing to sub-regional integration and economic development.



Regional, continental and international synergies

As a privileged technical partner of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union, the SRFC is committed to complementing and enabling efforts of these organizations. It actively contributes to the implementation of the African Union's Vision 2063 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in the areas of fisheries, aquaculture and the blue economy.

II.2. PROJECTS AND THEIR IMPACTS

Over its 40-year existence, the SRFC has implemented several programs and projects that have made a significant contribution to the subregion's member states. They have focused on a variety of topics, ranging from research to fisheries management, control, and surveillance. The most significant programs and projects are presented below.

II.2.1. Sub-Regional Action Plan for the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Sharks - PSRA - Sharks

PSRA-SHARKS: A STRATEGIC PROGRAM FOR THE PROTECTION OF SHARKS IN WEST AFRICA

The PSRA-Sharks Project, implemented by the SRFC from 2005 to 2011, was launched in response to the FAO International Plan of Action for Sharks. In the SRFC area, the targeted exploitation of rays and sharks (or sharks more generally) has intensified since the 1970s, coinciding with the development of the fin trade, and then accelerated after the devaluation of the

CFA franc in 1994. Faced with the risks of shark stock collapse and their consequences on biodiversity and ecosystems, SRFC member states have implemented a sub-regional strategy for the conservation of these particularly vulnerable species.

This project, funded to the tune of €1.2 million by FIBA, which began after the adoption of the PSRA-Sharks in 2001, addressed various aspects related to research, field studies, the development of management measures and the harmonization of rules at the sub-regional level. The project adopted a sub-regional approach coordinated by the fisheries directorates and research institutions of the SRFC member states, thus creating a practical collaborative framework to protect these species from any form of misexploitation.



MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

The PSRA-Sharks has helped highlight the threats facing shark populations in the sub-region through awareness-raising and capitalization activities. In terms of scientific data, it has enhanced existing databases and deployed networks of investigators in all SRFC member states to monitor landings, creating comprehensive databases on catches and fishing efforts. In-depth studies on shark migrations and Fisheries trajectories have been completed. Capacity building efforts have resulted in the training of over 100 observers, technicians, and managers, as well as the production of an identification guide for West African ray and shark species. On the institutional level, the project has enabled the development and adoption of National Shark Action Plans in the seven member states of the SRFC and the establishment of specific technical management measures, such as the cessation of targeted fishing for particular shark species (such as the guitarfish ray) in the Banc d'Arguin National Park in Mauritania or the ban on finning in Cabo Verde, Gambia, Guinea and Senegal.

PROJECT IMPACT

The Shark PSRA has helped refine statistical data by species, improve understanding of shark biology and ecology, and in the precise identification of related fishing areas and techniques. It has generated political commitment from states, improved the quality of scientific advice for decision-making, and led to changes in legislation regarding the exploitation of sharks. Raising awareness among stakeholders has also increased awareness among fishing professionals (fishermen and processors), decision-makers, and scientists about the fragility of the resource, thereby generating requests for support to transition to alternative activities and improve the public image of the shark species.

In a major step forward for the conservation and sustainable management of sharks in West Africa, this project contributed to protecting these exceptionally vulnerable shark species through a participatory and multidisciplinary approach and links between stakeholders and political bodies.

II.2.2. Development of co-management initiatives and the integration of MPAs into fisheries management in West Africa – CO-MANAGEMENT/MPA

CO-MANAGEMENT/MPA: AN INNOVATIVE INITIATIVE FOR THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF FISHERIES IN WEST AFRICA

With €5 million in financial support from the French Development Agency (FDA), the CO-MANAGEMENT/MPA project was implemented by SRFC between 2008 and 2013 to promote environmental, economic, and political stability in West Africa. The project adopted a dual approach: (1) the development of co-management directly involving fishing communities in fisheries management decisions and (2) the integration of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) as



tools for managing fisheries resources. The SRFC coordinated this project in partnership with national fisheries administrations, professional organizations, MPA managers, and national oceanographic and fisheries research institutions in its member states, thus creating an unprecedented sub-regional synergy for fisheries governance.

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

The project transformed the approach to fisheries management in the sub-region through a series of complementary actions. In terms of co-management, it enabled the creation of a sub-regional inventory and the assessment of the capacities of professional organizations, leading to the participatory development of management plans, particularly in Guinea.

Studies of the impacts of MPAs have been conducted using standardised methods and technical support and institutional strengthening assistance were provided to Member States. MPA management was provided through training workshops, capitalization actions, and the creation of a regional network for exchanging information on best practices. This project culminated in a symposium presenting the results of the study on the State of the Art on MPAs worldwide. The results of this symposium were published in a book entitled «Marine Protected Areas in Fisheries Management.»

PROJECT IMPACT

The project strengthened the SRFC's institutional capacity, positioning the organisation as a regional benchmark for fisheries policies that integrate the ecosystem approach within r Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). As a result, consultations between stakeholders improved, creating spaces for constructive dialogue between fishermen, government agencies, and scientists. Professional organizations gained both legitimacy and expertise. Ultimately, the project helped establish MPAs as effective fisheries management tools thereby extending their benefits beyond their conservation function.

The project significantly contributed to sustainable management of fisheries resources in the SRFC area by integrating both ecological (MPA) and socioeconomic (co-management) dimensions into fisheries management policies.

II.2.3. West Africa Regional Fisheries Programme – PRAO/WARFP

PRAO: A COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVE FOR SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF WEST AFRICAN FISHERIES

The PRAO Program, approved by the World Bank in 2009 for the seven SRFC member states, as well as Ghana and Liberia, was launched to sustainably increase the wealth generated by West African countries through improved management of their coastal fisheries. Funded with a net investment of US\$2.5 million from national and regional IDA funds and the Global Environment Funds (GEF), PRAO was structured around four key components: fisheries resource management, reduction of illegal fishing, development of infrastructure to host value added products from the fisheries sector, and regional coordination. The latter was ensured by the SRFC through a Regional Coordination Unit. This integrated approach enabled the fisheries sector to address its major challenges, including the decline in fisheries resources, weak institutional capacity, and excessive exploitation by foreign vessels.

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

The PRAO Programme has played a key role in the dynamics of sub-regional integration for sustainable management of fisheries resources. It has had significant implications for the SRFC and the nine countries (SRFC, Ghana, and Liberia) covered. Several activities have been carried out in different countries, including substantial support for scientific research through the financing of stock assessment campaigns and the development of management and development plans for the primary resources.

The program has also invested heavily in the fight against IUU fishing by providing quality support to national monitoring centres through the acquisition of equipment, as well as by financing control and surveillance operations at sea. The PRAO funded also the adoption of the Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance Convention, the purpose of which is to better coordinate and organize efforts for combating IUU fishing. As a result, a regional register of industrial fishing vessels has been established.

Furthermore, as part of efforts to improve transparency in the fisheries sector, the program has enabled the development of a regional dashboard developed through a participatory and collaborative process with member states. National teams have received training on managing and updating national dashboards. Equipment has also been provided to participating countries.

Given the importance of raising awareness about sustainable fishing, PRAO has worked to build networks of journalists to spread the message about the need to implement appropriate fisheries policies and inform fishermen about best fishing practices to ensure

sustainable fishing. Co-management Associations, with elected members, have been established with statutes and regulations legally registered with the relevant government institutions.

PROJECT IMPACT

The regional Dashboard, funded by PRAO, has attracted support from the member states. It has demonstrated the need for an effective tool for monitoring key management indicators in the fisheries sector. Not only does the Dashboard provide information on the fisheries situation, but it also guarantees a level of transparency that can aid in effective management and thus prevent abuses.

PRAO initiated the development of the sub-regional register of fishing vessels, an important tool in the fight against IUU fishing and introduced a sustainable financing mechanism for MCS activities. It supported the strengthening of national MCS centres by providing them the appropriate means and tools to effectively combat IUU fishing and other harmful practices in the fishing sector. Further, PRAO participated in the finalisation of the process for adopting the Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance Convention by Member States. It also developed an operational guide for implementing the 2009 FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter, and Eliminate IUU Fishing, which is the first binding international agreement specifically targeting IUU fishing.

PRAO remains a major project that has supported scientific research, fisheries management, and fisheries monitoring, control, and surveillance. It has also enabled the development and updating of an innovative tool on fisheries transparency (Dashboard) and a sub-regional vessel registry as an important tool in the fight against IUU fishing.

II.2.4. Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries and Marine Environment Management in West African Waters – AWA

AWA: A PIONEERING INITIATIVE FOR ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES IN WEST AFRICA

AWA began with a first stage of co-construction in 2012 between African and European scientists that went on to be recognized as a standard of good practice. Funded from 2013 to 2018 by the IRD and the BMBF for an amount of €2.1 million, AWA developed the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries and Marine Environment Management (EAMME). This approach enabled the sectoral approach to be

integrative in its agricultural (including fisheries and aquaculture) and environmental (marine) dimensions in the broadest sense. AWA mobilised more than 100 institutions, including universities and research organisations from around 30 countries, thereby creating an unprecedented international network of expertise for the study and preservation of West African marine ecosystems.

The project involved 42 founding laboratories, reinforced by a consortium agreement with the European PREFACE project, which brought the number of partner laboratories to 52 and opened up the “ocean - fisheries” climate component for the first time in the region.

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

The achievements focus on monitoring fisheries resources and analysing the functioning of their environment, combining ecosystem studies, biological, physical, and socioeconomic monitoring, as well as advanced modelling. The project has achieved a landmark outcome by producing more than 400 international communications and over 200 peer-reviewed articles, forming more than 70 students, conducting 18 interdisciplinary oceanographic research campaigns, hosting two summer schools, and participating in seven international conferences, as well as four high-level meetings. The project enabled the strengthening of technical skills at both the institutional and individual levels through training of researchers and students. The dissemination of knowledge led to the convening of an annual of international and interdisciplinary ICAMA conferences over the 5-year project period. These conferences, beyond their thematic sessions that brought together internationally renowned specialists, allowed the organisation of parallel events that brought together decision-makers, managers, and scientists. By providing a proper forum for exchange, the ICAMA conferences raised a range of issues still facing the region.

PROJECT IMPACT

The AWA project has strengthened regional cooperation between SRFC and CPCO member states, notably through the establishment of a regional task force capable of addressing the challenges of overfishing, climate change, and marine pollution, which are now widely accepted as the main stressors on the ecosystem in the region. It also led to the drafting of the Dakar Ocean Climate Declaration (pre-COP21) and contributed to the establishment of the Blue Belt Initiative (BBI) and the African Package for Climate-Resilient Ocean Economies in Africa adopted at COP22.



The AWA project laid the foundations for the creation of a West African observatory, adopting a transdisciplinary and intersectoral ecosystem approach to the sustainability of fisheries resources and their habitats, encompassing themes such as fisheries, oceans, coastlines, climate, and society. It helped strengthen West African expertise and provided a platform for exchanges between scientists, managers, and policymakers.

II.2.5. Sustainable management of Small Pelagic populations in the SRFC zone

AGD-Pélagiques: A STRATEGIC INITIATIVE FOR THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF SMALL PELAGICS

Funded by the MAVA Foundation to the tune of 2.6 million, the "AGD-Pélagiques" project was implemented by the SRFC from 2018 to 2022. It contributed to improving data collection and knowledge systems on small pelagic stocks, strengthening sub-regional cooperation in research on small pelagic stocks and enabling the assessment of coastal zone governance for small pelagic stocks. The SRFC led this initiative in collaboration with national oceanographic and fisheries research institutes (ISRA/CRODT - Senegal, MFWR/FD - The Gambia, INIPO - Guinea-Bissau, IMROP - Mauritania, CNSHB - Guinea) and strategic partners (IRD, CSE, TMT, UBC), creating an effective sub-regional synergy for scientific and sustainable management of fisheries resources.

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

The project transformed the approach to small pelagic management in the sub-region through a set of complementary activities. In terms of data collection, it enabled the dematerialisation and sub-regional harmonisation of national survey forms for landing sites. Research centres were equipped with scientific tools, investigators were recruited and/or trained, and field equipment was purchased (vehicles, motorbikes, computer equipment). Then, a system using digital

tablets was deployed in five countries to standardize data collection, combining environmental data, thus offering investigators a new prerogative and facilitating exchanges with research centres. A mobile application (ODK Collect) was set up to allow the semi-delayed transmission of information collected at landing sites to research centres.

Regarding the improvement of scientific knowledge, the project enabled the identification and characterization of critical areas for small pelagics, leading to the creation of a dynamic atlas of critical sites. In collaboration with UBC, training was organized on stock assessment methods in data-poor situations. Scientists in the sub-region also benefited from capacity building on the use of AIS and VMS data from vessels to combat illegal fishing.

PROJECT IMPACT

The project significantly improved the quality of fisheries data, resulting in a reduction in data entry errors and the elimination of the transcription step, thereby saving a significant amount of time in processing information from landing sites. Research centre investigators were recruited, equipped, trained, and networked as «the eyes and ears of the coast.» Their expertise was extended to the environment. Cooperation between research institutions was strengthened, resulting in the production of peer-reviewed articles. Information exchange between Member States was improved, and each research centre adopted a standardized subregional format. Collaboration between research institutions and fisheries monitoring structures was intensified, creating spaces for dialogue between scientists and fisheries administrators.

The project has enabled the deepening of knowledge on the critical habitats of small pelagics and has consolidated the scientific foundations needed for developing appropriate policies for the governance of fishing zones. The successes in dematerialisation of data collection systems, the identification of critical sites, and bioeconomic modelling are tangible project outcomes that are now adopted by stakeholders.

II.2.6. Programme for the improvement of regional fisheries governance in West Africa - PESCAO

PESCAO : STRATEGIC INITIATIVE TO FIGHT ILLEGAL FISHING IN WEST AFRICA

Funded by the European Union (EU), component 2 of the PESCAO program, dedicated to combating IUU fishing was implemented by the SRFC as part of a strategic approach to consolidate and sustain the achievements of previous projects aimed at combating illegal fishing. Between 2011 and 2013, the EU-funded MCS/EU project laid the groundwork for coordinated sub-regional surveillance by creating a sub-regional vessel registry and building capacity within national surveillance structures. Then, the MCS component of the GoWAMER project, implemented from 2016 to 2017, with financial support from the EU, carried out sub-regional activities through joint surveillance campaigns. Similarly, the SRFC developed draft Ethmalose Management Plans for five countries (Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, and Senegal), the preparation of which is illustrated in country-specific films. In addition, the SRFC developed a sub-regional «Ethmalose» strategy as part of the same project. The PESCAO project, with funding of €3.625 million from 2018 to 2023, was a key step in strengthening the mechanisms previously established by the SRFC, taking into account the lessons learned from previous projects. This continuity of action has enabled the gradual development of a coherent system for combating illegal fishing among the seven member states of the SRFC.

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

The PESCAO project has undertaken significant actions, ranging from harmonising the legal frameworks of member states to align their legislation with international standards to developing and/or updating national action plans to combat illegal fishing, thereby

strengthening the regional regulatory framework. At the operational level, PESCAO has organised several joint surveillance operations, resulting in the inspection of over 700 vessels in the sub-region and the boarding of nearly 100 for various violations. The project has also enabled the SRFC MCS Working Group to meet regularly, strengthening information exchange between its member states. MCS infrastructure and equipment have been significantly improved, creating a more integrated surveillance network. In addition, PESCAO has contributed to building the capacities of nearly 300 fisheries inspectors, including around 30 women and approximately 30 surveillance centre operators, to equip the staff of national MCS centres and to support the operation of the country Dashboard.

PROGRAM IMPACT

The impacts of the PESCAO project are all the more significant because they built on the results of previous projects, creating a cumulative effect. The harmonization of legal frameworks has helped fill gaps in the fight against illegal fishing and improve transparency in fisheries management. The pooling of resources among SRFC member states has significantly increased the effectiveness of surveillance operations, as evidenced by the results of the boardings. Communications between national MCS structures and the regional centre have also been strengthened.

The PESCAO project marks a decade of coordinated efforts to establish an effective subregional system for combating illegal fishing. Building on the achievements of previous MCS projects, it has not only strengthened technical and institutional capacities but also established a dynamic of sustainable subregional integration in fisheries governance. This sequential and cumulative approach highlights the importance of a long-term vision and continuity of action in addressing the complex challenges of combating illegal fishing in the SRFC area.





III. MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS AND SUCCESSES

Over its 40 years of existence, the SRFC has achieved several notable milestones that have enabled it to position itself as a leading cooperative organisation. These achievements for the benefit of its member states include (i) the harmonization of policies and legislation of member states, (ii) fisheries research and management, and (iii) the monitoring, control and surveillance of fishing activities.

III.1. HARMONIZATION OF POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

Among its achievements is the development and signing of the below conventions and protocols aimed at organizing cooperation relations between the member states of the SRFC.

III.1.1. Convention on Minimum Conditions of Access to Fisheries Resources, known as the CMA Convention



The Convention on the «Determination of the Conditions of Access and Exploitation of Fisheries Resources off the Coasts of the Member States of the SRFC» was adopted on June 18, 2012. In the context of the rapid evolution of the regional and international legal environment, the Member States of the SRFC region decided on June 8, 2012, to update it. This update led to the adoption of the Convention on the «Determination of the Conditions of Access and Exploitation of Fisheries Resources within the Maritime Zones under the Jurisdiction of the Member States of the SRFC,» or, more simply, the CMA. The latter is considered as an innovative sub-regional legal instrument and was quickly entered into force on September 16 2012.

The CMA Convention aims, in particular, to promote the conservation, management, and sustainable exploitation of fisheries resources. It reflects the desire of States to ensure policy harmonization for the better exploitation of fisheries resources. It covers, among other things, a set of provisions relating to access to resources by third-party vessels, conditions for the conservation and management of resources, measures within the state's jurisdiction, and measures to combat IUU fishing, including offences and sanctions. Among the innovative elements of this Convention, it is important to note the inclusion, for the first time, of aspects related to small-scale fishing and the introduction of Article 33, which gives the SRFC the ability to refer the matter to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea for an advisory opinion upon authorization by the Conference of Ministers.

Finally, it is worth noting that three draft additional protocols to the CMA Convention have been developed on (i) artisanal fishing, (ii) MPAs as a fisheries management tool, and (iii) bycatch of marine turtles and seabirds. A final one on the use of AIS for fisheries monitoring in the sub-region will soon be presented.

III.1.2. Convention on Sub-Regional Cooperation in the Exercise of the Right of Maritime Hot Pursuit

Signed on September 1, 1993, in Conakry, Republic of Guinea, the purpose of this Convention is to establish the rules and modalities for strengthening cooperation between the structures responsible for fisheries surveillance of the States Parties; to define the general principles governing the right of pursuit of any vessel that attempts to evade the control of a country whose jurisdiction it violates in its waters. It establishes the fundamental principles relating to cooperation between the Parties when exercising this right of pursuit, including the settlement of the effects resulting from the exercise of this right. The purpose of the Convention is to allow one of the States Parties to pursue and even board by its means (ship or aircraft) «beyond its maritime border, when, after the usual warnings have remained unsuccessful, a vessel attempts to evade the control of the pursuing State». The key provision of this Convention is the extension of the right of hot pursuit (Article 111 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) to the territorial seas of member states, the ultimate zone of full sovereignty. This provision regarding the right of hot pursuit is a new and unique development in the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea's provisions.

III.1.3. Convention on Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) of Fishing Activities



After 10 years of negotiations, member states of the SRFC unanimously decided, during the special session of the Conference of Ministers held on the sidelines of the «African Consultation in preparation for the 3rd United Nations Conference on Oceans (UNOC-3)», held on October 9, 2024, in Tangier (Morocco), to proceed with the signing of the MCS Convention.

The MCS Convention is a sub-regional legal instrument that aims to organize and coordinate the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. It defines the roles and responsibilities of the SRFC and its Member States in matters of MCS. It establishes a more effective operational organisation of the MCS, particularly through the creation of a Sub-Regional Coordination, a National Authority, and an MCS Working Group (MCS WG). The MCS Convention establishes a sub-regional register of industrial fishing vessels and a sub-regional mechanism for exchanging information on aspects related to the MCS activities of fishing vessels. These two important instruments in the fight against IUU fishing ensure the fluidity of exchanges between Member States regarding the lists of vessels, both regular and those engaged in IUU fishing. Additionally, the sharing of experience on the

implementation of the PSMA through inspections of vessels in ports are addressed in this Convention.

The MCS Convention defines the status of the sub-regional fisheries observer, including selection criteria, rights and obligations, embarkation and disembarkation arrangements, and the administrative and financial management of the sub-regional fisheries observer program. The implementation arrangements are defined in an implementing protocol.

III.1.4. A decisive legal opinion



In 2013, the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC) marked a historic turning point by referring the matter to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), becoming the first international organization to submit a request for an advisory opinion to this high-level international legal body. With this initiative, the SRFC sought first to clarify the responsibilities of flag States in cases of IUU fishing by their vessels in the exclusive economic zones of Member States. In its advisory opinion, ITLOS confirmed that flag States must take all necessary measures to prevent their vessels from engaging in IUU fishing activities in the EEZs of SRFC member States, including by ensuring strict administrative control, ensuring compliance with national regulations, and applying sufficient dissuasive sanctions. However, the Tribunal also clarified that flag States can only be held liable if they have failed in their duty of «due diligence»; in other words, a State that takes all appropriate measures cannot be held liable for the unlawful actions of its vessels.

ITLOS also clarified that when an international organization concludes a fisheries agreement on behalf of its members, it is that organization—and not its individual member States—that can be held liable for a vessel's violation of the laws of a coastal State. The opinion ultimately emphasises the importance of regional cooperation for the sustainable management of shared fisheries resources, particularly small pelagics and tunas, as provided for in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

To give concrete meaning to this historic opinion, the SRFC has developed a Regional Action Plan for its implementation (PAR-TIDM) based on the national plans validated by each of the Member States. This plan, adopted at the 28th extraordinary session of the Coordinating Committee, aims to eradicate illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the SRFC area and enhance the management of shared stocks. It is based on five major priorities: strengthening the institutional and legal framework at the national and sub-regional levels; developing the Monitoring, Control and Surveillance system; protecting artisanal fisheries from the impacts of IUU fishing; sustainable and concerted management of common resources; and finally, information, awareness-raising, advocacy and promotion of achievements. Through this approach, the SRFC demonstrated its ability to transform a legal decision into a strategic lever, thus consolidating its legitimacy in the sustainable governance of fisheries in West Africa.

The SRFC referral to the Full Tribunal in 2013 was a first in the history of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS). The opinion issued by this independent United Nations judicial body strengthened the position of SRFC member states in defending their maritime rights and protecting their fisheries resources. To translate this opinion into concrete action, the SRFC established a Regional Action Plan (PAR-ITLOS), which was validated by its member states. With this initiative, the SRFC confirmed its leading role in subregional integration for fisheries governance based on law, solidarity, and sustainability.

III.1.5. Other major policy harmonization initiatives

In addition to establishing a harmonised regulatory framework, other major initiatives complementary initiatives were carried out by the SRFC. These include :

- Conduct of a comparative study of national legislation about the CMA Convention, which presents coherently and straightforwardly the divergences and convergences between the national legislation governing fishing in the member States of the SRFC with respect to the fundamental principles of management and preservation of fisheries resources as provided for in the CMA Convention;
- The establishment of an electronic compendium of national fishing legislations which brings together all applicable fishing regulations adopted by each member states;
- Mapping and analysis of fishing and environmental regulations for Mauritania, Senegal, and Guinea;
- The establishment of national and sub-regional committees to monitor the governance of marine and coastal resources (MCR) and the coherence of fisheries policies;
- The development of a study on the regulation, practical use and impacts of monofilament nets/ gill nets in the SRFC sub-region.

III.2. SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND FISHERIES MANAGEMENT



Since its inception, the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC) has consistently maintained that scientific knowledge forms the foundation of sustainable fisheries resource management. This founding vision led to the creation of the Research and Information Systems Department (DRSI), which is now established as the Fisheries Management Centre. A true driving force behind institutional innovation, this department has played a pivotal role in the design and implementation of pioneering projects, thereby consolidating the SRFC as a regional reference organisation in fisheries governance.

The SRFC has promoted an increasingly integrated and participatory approach to fisheries management. The promotion of co-management and the integration of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) as levers of sustainability paved the way for the development of the concept of the Ecosystem Approach to the Management of Fisheries and the Marine Environment (EAMME). This strategic framework, initiated by the project «Co-management and use of marine protected areas as a fisheries management tool», was formalized and consolidated in the AWA project, which mobilized some forty laboratories, universities, research centres and public institutions in the sub-region. Activities include state-of-the-art studies on co-management and MPAs as a fisheries management tool, support for the establishment of a consultation structure at the Guinean Ministry of Fisheries, as well as targeted analysis and recommendations for strengthening the governance and management of marine protected areas in the PNBA sites, Mauritania, Kayar MPAs, Bamboung, Urok, Tristao, Cape Verde MPAs and Gambia MPAs. Alternatively, the realization of diagnostic studies of professional organizations to strengthen their capacities in terms of co-management, the organization of the sub-regional workshop for the restitution of co-management studies, the revision of the management plan of the Bamboung MPA (Senegal), the implementation of thematic workshops and working groups on the definition of participatory monitoring methodologies. Finally, the SRFC also conducted national assessments of fisheries dynamics, modelled MPA governance scenarios, and capitalised on data from scientific monitoring. The DRSI also contributed to the formulation of three development plans that integrate the ecosystem approach in member countries, particularly in Mauritania, Senegal, and Guinea, as well as to the assessment of the contribution of marine ecosystems to poverty reduction. The SRFC was a key partner in providing technical support to national processes. It supported the General Fisheries Conference in Guinea (2013), with technical participation in the preparatory and diagnostic work, as well as the development of

Mauritania's national fisheries strategy (2014), with the drafting of proposals for technical components, or the consideration of fisheries issues in the of Cabo Verde, Guinea and Senegal.

In addition, the SRFC supported the harmonization of management policies for mullet, tassergal and corvina in conjunction with the FAO/CCLME. As part of the PARTAGE, Co-management and MPA projects, the SRFC facilitated the creation of consultation frameworks in the Rias of Guinea-Bissau (Cacheu, Buba, Cacine), accompanied by local co-management measures. It also organised technical meetings on small pelagics in the Member States, supported the development, refinement, and implementation of national action plans, led regional consultation workshops on shared stocks, and established the sub-regional framework for the development and monitoring of bilateral fisheries agreements. Finally, in this context, the SRFC also conducted fisheries diagnostics validated with stakeholders, which contributed to the regional consistency of management plans.

The SRFC conducted feasibility studies to structure its fisheries information system. It supported synergies with national observatories and partners such as IUCN and GIZ, assessed data availability in member countries and developed specifications for the implementation of the Dashboard. Additionally, within this framework, the SRFC designed and implemented a consolidated database of available documents, ran the website with regular monitoring of usage and technical publications and published a capitalisation booklet on the results of the PSRA-Sharks. The SRFC also published the results of studies on co-management and MPAs in several languages.

The structuring projects implemented by the SRFC have formed the pillars of regional action. The Co-management-MPA project, financed by the AFD (2008–2013), supported the integration of Marine Protected Areas and co-management into fisheries management systems in Senegal, Mauritania, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and Cape Verde. Through baseline studies, the establishment of national and regional working groups, the development of methodological tools, and analyses of MPA governance, this project helped strengthen the institutional and technical basis for co-management in the sub-region.

The AGRHAO initiative, supported by GIZ, reached all SRFC member states (Cabo Verde, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal, and Sierra Leone) with targeted interventions in information systems, artisanal fisheries, legal frameworks, and fishing techniques. The regional study on monofilament nets

and the mapping of fisheries-environment regulatory frameworks, conducted in Mauritania, Senegal, and Guinea in collaboration with IUCN, strengthened decision-making tools and intersectoral consultation processes.

The Small Pelagic Fish project, funded by the Netherlands and the AFD, supported the establishment of national committees and a regional advisory committee. It covered Mauritania, Senegal, and Gambia, with an extension to Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and Sierra Leone. The development of management plans, consultation workshops, socioeconomic assessments, and governance studies helped structure a coherent approach to the sustainable management of shared stocks.

The CEPIA project (Development and in situ testing of methods for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of MPAs for fisheries management and support for the revision of selected MPA management plans) had the main objective of developing and delivering methodological tools that promote the integration of MPAs into fisheries management tools in West Africa. Following the work carried out by the projects and various deliveries, the countries in the region have a range of complementary tools to strengthen the use of MPAs in the fisheries sector management.

The SRFC has established itself as a strategic regional player, combining scientific research, support for national policies, facilitation of consultations, and defence of collective interests in international forums. Through its actions, it has solidified the foundations of sustainable fisheries governance, grounded in science, consultation, and regional integration.

III.3. FISHERIES MONITORING, CONTROL AND SURVEILLANCE

In a context marked by the rise of illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing in West African waters, the SRFC quickly assessed the scale of the issue and committed to a structured, united, and ambitious response. Aware that the fight against this scourge cannot be carried out effectively in isolation, it has worked to establish cooperation mechanisms between its member states while mobilizing technical and financial partnerships to support this collective effort. The SRFC Surveillance Operations Coordinating Unit was established in 1995 in Banjul to coordinate sub-regional fisheries surveillance activities and strengthen the capacity of member states' fisheries surveillance personnel and structures. The SRFC supported the

creation of national fisheries surveillance structures within the ministries responsible for fisheries in each member state. The SRFC facilitated full adherence to the international plan of action to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing. It formally called on the international community to provide support and cooperation to SRFC member states in their fight against illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. The formal approach was well received by the European Union, which has been funding sub-regional projects to combat IUU fishing since 2011 (the first was the MCS/EU/UEMOA project (2011 and 2013)). The implementation of the project by SRFC enabled the development of the first joint fisheries monitoring campaign, as well as the creation of a sub-regional register of industrial fishing vessels, the strengthening of national MCS structures, and the development of a document on mechanisms for the sustainability of MCS financing in the SRFC zone.

Large-scale programs, such as GoWAMER and PESCAO, have enabled the SRFC to develop recognised operational expertise in combating IUU fishing. They followed projects such as AFR 010 and 013, the first large-scale projects implemented by the SRFC to operationalize the sub-regional policy to combat illegal fishing (Convention on Sub-Regional Cooperation in the Exercise of the Right of Maritime Hot Pursuit and its Protocol on the Practical Arrangements for Coordination of Surveillance Operations in the SRFC Member States (1993)).

These results have notably promoted the strengthening of national Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS) services through technical training and the equipping of specific units with light equipment. Beyond institutional support, they have enabled the implementation of numerous joint surveillance operations at sea, mobilizing several countries around common objectives of control and deterrence.

In this context, the SRFC has played a central role in the development and modernisation of regional legal instruments in support of national legislation. The Convention on Minimum Conditions of Access (CMA), the Convention on the Right of Hot Pursuit, and the Convention on Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (CMCS) were created under its leadership, providing Member States with a daily legal basis for concerted action. At the same time, the MCS working group was established as a strategic space for exchanges between operational and technical managers of Member States. Strengthening the fight against IUU fishing has also relied on the gradual harmonization of monitoring tools

and information systems. The SRFC has encouraged the standardisation of national databases and the establishment of shared dashboards centred on common indicators related to fishing fleets, licenses, fishing efforts, and surveillance efforts. A sub-regional MCS strategy, accompanied by a detailed action plan, has been developed to guide States in their coordination efforts. Similarly, a strategic document on sustainable MCS financing mechanisms has been developed to ensure the sustainability of achievements. Support for the implementation of concrete measures

has also led to the publication of an operational guide on Port State measures, thereby contributing to the strengthening of port controls in the sub-region.

Through its ongoing commitment and the results achieved, the SRFC has established its leadership role in the fight against IUU fishing in West Africa. It has thus contributed to restoring the sovereignty of States over their marine resources while laying the foundations for collective, effective and sustainable governance of maritime fisheries.



IV. STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS: 40 YEARS OF COMMITMENT, A RENEWED COURSE FOR THE FUTURE

Since its creation, the SRFC has been engaged in a process aimed at supporting its member states in a progressive dynamic that aims to stimulate cooperation for the sustainable, concerted, and united management of fisheries resources. Through its successive strategic plans, it has been able to evolve its priorities to respond to emerging challenges while consolidating the achievements of sub-regional governance.

IV.1. FOUNDATIONS LAID

Having worked with annual plans for many years, the SRFC decided to engage in long-term planning. Thus, the SRFC's first strategic plan (2003–2008) laid the foundations for institutional cooperation in the management of shared resources, building on collaborations that began with the Commission for the Conservation and Preservation of Fisheries Resources (CCPFR), established in 1976 among Senegal, Mauritania, and the Gambia. The first strategic plan established the first common legal frameworks, stimulated political dialogue between states, and structured the steering bodies.

IV.2. TOWARDS STRUCTURED SUB-REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

The second strategic plan (2011–2015) strengthened the normative role of the SRFC with the adoption of key sub-regional conventions, the expansion of the Permanent Secretariat's missions, and an intensification of efforts to combat illegal fishing. The SRFC has established itself as a key player in sub-regional dialogue on fisheries management.

IV.3. INTEGRATION OF SCIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

With its third strategic plan (2019–2023), the SRFC has fully integrated the issues of sustainability and resilience into its strategic paradigms, including the ecosystem approach, promotion of scientific research, local promotion of products, employment in the fisheries sector, and forecasting issues linked to the development of sustainable aquaculture.

IV.4. A NEW COURSE FOR 2025–2029

Building on the achievements of previous cycles, the 2025–2029 strategic plan, which will be submitted for approval to the Conference of Ministers in July 2025, asserts an ambitious vision: to make the SRFC a lever of sub-regional sovereignty over marine and continental resources, a central player in collaborative research between Member States, and a driving force for sustainable, inclusive, and resilient public policies that explicitly embrace the concept of sustainability. It is structured around six strategic axes that reinforce previous commitments while opening up new perspectives for action in the face of global challenges: governance, science, fisheries sector monitoring, the blue economy, climate, and institutional strengthening.

IV.5. A PATH OF CONTINUOUS CONSOLIDATION AND ADAPTATION

The evolution of strategic plans reflects the gradual maturation of the SRFC's mandate, which has shifted from a coordination approach in its early days to a structuring, normative, and technical role in the 2010s and then to a role of strategic, scientific, and diplomatic influence in recent years.

The SRFC has established itself today as a key player in ocean policies in West Africa, recognized for its ability to align subregional and regional priorities with continental (Vision 2063) and international objectives, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Climate Agenda, and the Ocean Decade.



A diversity of committed partners

For 40 years, the SRFC has relied on a wide range of partners engaged in ocean governance, development cooperation, scientific research, and support for fishing communities. These partners fall into several categories as defined below with listing of the leading actors in each category.

• Intergovernmental Organizations



• Donors and Cooperation Agencies



• UN Partners



• Professional Organisations



• Non-Governmental Organisations

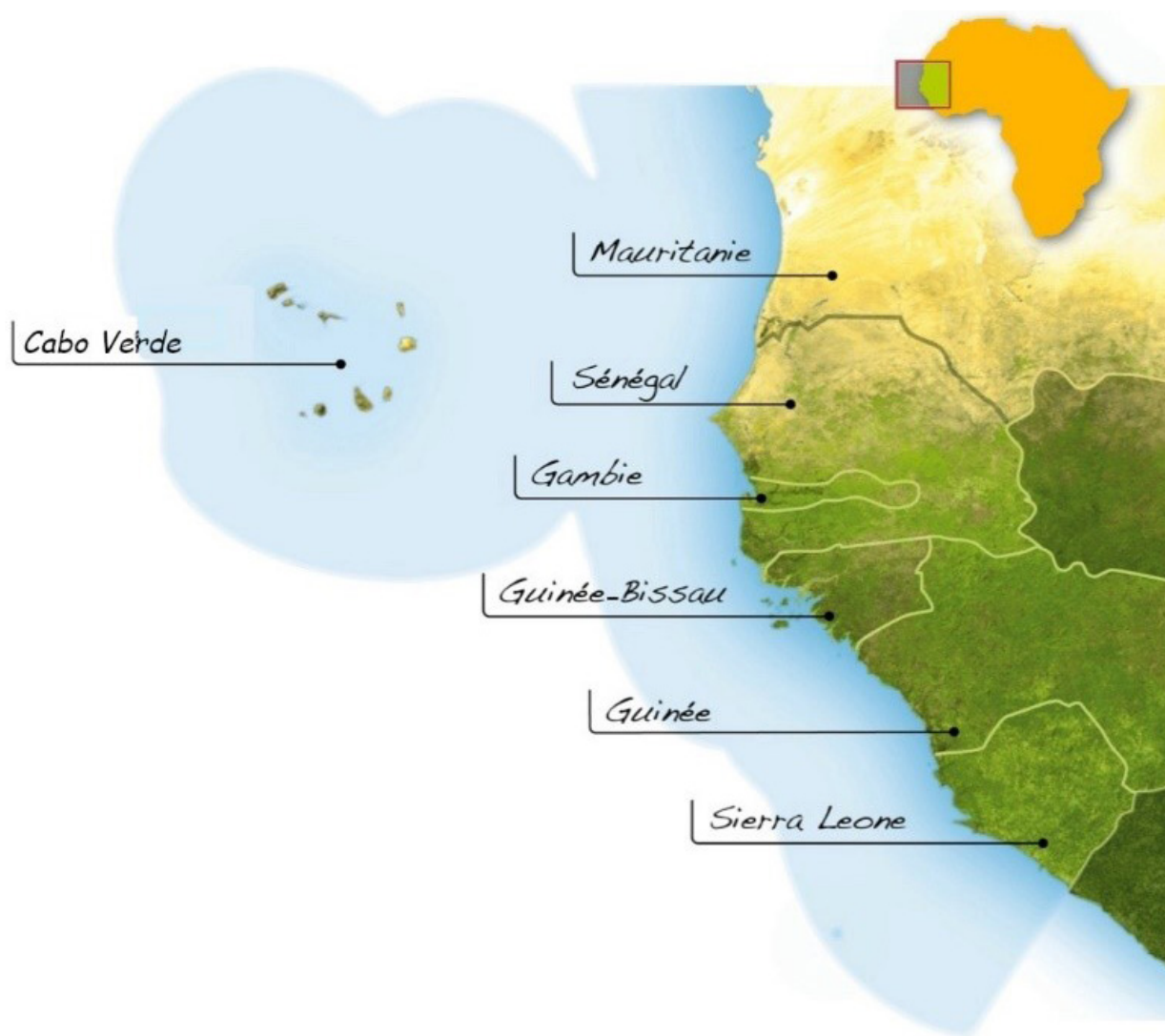


• Scientific and Technical Institutes









COMMISSION SOUS-RÉGIONALE DES PÊCHES
SUB-REGIONAL FISHERIES COMMISSION

Secrétariat Permanent de la CSR/P

221, Allées Serigne Ababacar SY N°5218 Sicap Liberté IV

BP 25485 - Dakar, Fann, Sénégal

Téléphone : (+221) 33 864 04 75

Fax : (+221) 33 864 04 77

Email : spcsrp@spcsrp.org

Site web : www.spcsrp.org

