

# The feminisation of poverty as an impact of globalisation in West African Small-Scale Fisheries

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# International markets as drivers of change

- The globalisation concept as referring to the expansion of markets is no new phenomenon to artisanal fisheries in West Africa.
- For >decade, several factors have combined to prevent public authorities to recognise the true value of the importance of small-scale fishing (SSF)
- As a result, we are witnessing a process of de-regulation of social organisation of communities the first victims of which are women in SSF.

# International trade effects (1)

- The international seafood market as Main vector for creating new value chains in the face of resource rarefaction
- Associated de-structuration of social organisation in fishing communities
- Women relegated from original roles as family entrepreneurs gradually to poorly recognised supporting roles



## International trade effects (2)

- An intelligent adaptation to the informal sector by international sea food investors / traders, particularly from Asia, to penetrate the fishing communities:
- **Control** the capital assets in the SSF (means of production).
- These have increased prices very significantly as a result of resource rarefaction and competition.
- Effects on the social tissue



# Explaining the effects (1)

## 1. Women in processing and marketing (fresh and processed products):

- UEMOA Study 2014: Benin, Senegal, Guinea Bissau, Togo, Côte d'Ivoire: **30.000** operators in fresh fish marketing (**85%** women);
- Processing sector is poorly documented: **Only for SN, 1600** women entrepreneurs creating **4500** jobs directly around small pelagics, e.g. for many young men from rural areas



# Explaining the effects (2)

## 2. Women's important social status in traditional communities

- **Exclusive access** to all landed catches;
- Profits from marketing partly used as credit to fishermen (pre-financing fishing trips whenever needed);
- Important role both upstream and downstream of fishing operations (managers of family assets).



### 2. Women's important social status in traditional communities (cont'd)

- Savings for social reproduction through rotating savings schemes (“tontines” for schooling, etc. (PM: Polygamie = social charges))
- Additional revenue coming from their role as **restaurateur**: One share as crew member.
- Valuable reserves: loincloth of value, jewelry, etc. (as bank savings and credit are unavailable)

## Explaining the effects (4)

### 3. Globalisation and feminisation of poverty - the process:

- Deep transformations in **the ownership structure** of the means of production: Increasing costs of means of production, gradual expropriation for the benefit of outside investors;
- Trend observed since more than one decade: specific issue concerning the increasing demand from international markets for **octopus** - neither part of culinary tradition, nor part of species marketed by women/ value chains dominated by middlemen working on commission;
- Markets for **new species**: e.g. Largehead hairtail ...



**Dispute between a commissioned trader and a woman in Mai 2018/ Hann**

## Explaining the effects: Examples

- The narrowing of the boundaries between the industrial and the craft sectors: Chinese + Koreans becoming owners of SSF boats
- So former SSF owner becomes crew: seen in Guinea, Guinea Bissau (all catches collected are exported; only low-value fish handled through local agents in local markets (higher price))
- Indian and Chinese operators invest in processing sector (e.g. dried salted shark) / Products exported mainly to Ghana, Nigeria, Central Africa from Senegal

## Explaining the effects: Examples (cont'd)

- **New types of migration = destructure** in a context of constraints to resource access: New legislation in RIM forces longer-term migration for supplies of fish meal factories, → women in SN lack access to raw material;
- Expansion **of factories triggers further migrations for** pelagics in direct competition of processing and marketing by women for human consumption.



## Explaining the effects: Examples (cont'd)

- Dependence on waste from exporting factories (SN, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau); case of Mballing in SN located about 90 km from the harbour.
- Dependence on deep-frozen pelagics from foreign trawlers operating along West African coast (even in SN, Guinea Conakry, not only Benin, Togo, Ghana, Nigeria).



# Conclusions

- Disappearance of some value chains in the processing sectors, where women used to be specialised (*Cybium*) = emblematic in culinary tradition, nowadays exploited by Coreans: exported deep-frozen;
- Responses by cash-strapped women are e.g. to intensify group purchases and setting up of mutual savings groups.



## Conclusions (cont'd)

- Women work on diversifying revenue generating activities (but only small businesses) in struggle to fight selective impoverishment in a global market.
- To stem the tide and retain/ regain their status as entrepreneurs, they will need well-structured and sustained access to education, social services and credit – the sort of structural support that has been successful in improving their lot in other countries.

**I'm still a baby,  
let me live and grow**



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