

## ***REPORT ON THE TRIP TO SOUTHERN SENEGAL OYSTER AND COCKLE HARVESTING COMMUNITIES***

### **Introduction:**

The three day transboundary visit by the TRY Oyster Women Association to Southern Senegal oyster and cockle harvesting communities started on the 9<sup>th</sup> January to 11<sup>th</sup> January 2014. The delegation of TRY composed the Coordinator Fatou Janha Mboob, Secretary of TRY Isatou Jarjue, Ebrima Jabang of the Department of Fisheries and Babanding Kanyi of the Department of Fisheries.

Five communities were visited which included Niafrang, Kabajo, Abene, Katak, Donbondir. These communities are engaged in oyster and cockle harvesting in Allahein estuary in Kartong in the Republic of the Gambia; thus sharing the oyster and cockle resources with Kartong. The shared stock of oyster and cockles requires implementation of joint transboundary co management strategy for exploitation of the fishery resources to ensure sustainable livelihood for both oyster and cockle harvesters on the two sides of the border. Therefore, the communities that share the fishery resources with Kartong need sensitization to enhance awareness on the declining stock.

### **Objective:**

- The objective of the mission to visit Southern Senegal oyster and cockle harvesting communities was to identify the existing communities that are engaged in oyster and cockle harvesting in the Allahein estuary.
- To create awareness on the joint transboundary co management plan of the shared stock of cockle and oyster in the Allahein estuary.
- To meet other stake holders in the management of the oyster and cockle fishery

### **Output:**

The first leg of the visit was in Niafrang community on the 9<sup>th</sup> January 2014. Niafrang is the first village after crossing the Allahein estuary in Southern Senegal. The oyster and cockle harvesters gathered under the tree near the Alkali's compound for the meeting. The attendance of the meeting included the Alkali's son, Fisherman, women oyster and cockle harvesters and youths. After the usual prayer, self introduction by participants was done so that oyster and cockle harvesters could be identified in the community and participants' was done simultaneously.

Fatou took the floor and did welcome everyone to the meeting and thank them for attendance. She pointed out that her mission was a fact finding one so as to identify the oyster and cockle harvesters in Niafrang. She introduced the TRY Oyster Women Association and its activities

done over the years. She told them that it is important that they discuss management measures and conservation of the shared oyster and fishery resources in the Allahein estuary, as their livelihood depend on those resources for many years. She pointed out to the participants that co management plan for oyster and cockle in Tanbi was prepared and approved by the Government of the Gambia, which is implemented by TRY Oyster Women Association. She informed the participants that the Plan is successful in the Gambia resulting to improved livelihood of women oyster and cockle harvesters, so that should be replicated in southern Senegal. She informed them of the joint transboundary co management plan that should be prepared by all stakeholders in the Gambia and Senegal for the sustainable exploitation of oyster and cockle fishery in Allahein estuary. She added that the preparation of the joint transboundary co management plan requires collaboration of all stakeholders and the governments' officials from both The Gambia and Senegal. This meeting, she said was the beginning of the process to prepare the joint transboundary co management plan and several consultation meetings will be organized to boost awareness of the resource users and stakeholders.

The oyster and cockle harvesters expressed happiness for the visit and the information gathered from the meeting. They promised to collaborate in the preparation of the joint transboundary co management plan as they are sharing the stock in Allahein with Kartong. They corroborated the idea to take sustainable management measures for the utilization of oyster and cockle resources in the Allahein estuary so that their children would also benefit from the fishery resource. Isatou Jarjue and the Alkali's son spoke in native language of Niafrang to clarify the message to other participants at the meeting. The meeting ended with a courtesy call on the Alkali who was reported sick to grace the occasion.

The delegation proceeded in the night to the next community called Kabajo which has the largest number of oyster and cockle harvesters in the sub region. It was already late to hold any meeting and the community was mourning the death of their kinsman as well so the delegation paid a courtesy call on one of the elders to inform the villagers about the meeting scheduled for the 12<sup>th</sup> January, 2014. The mission landed in Abene and spent at the night at Casamar Hotel.

In the next morning 10<sup>th</sup> January the delegation paid visit at the WWF office in Abene. The office staffs were introduced and the Gambian delegation did self introduction. Then a brief meeting was held at the office. TRY Coordinator outlined the mission to Southern Senegal and told them that meeting was held in Niafrang the other day and next meeting would be in Donbondir. The officer in charge of the expressed appreciation of effort of TRY initiative to prepare the joint transboundary co management plan for oyster and cockle in the Allahein estuary. He said that the Senegalese Department of Fisheries with collaboration of the Navy is enforcing closure area of 15 Nautical miles stretching from Abene to Kafunting and 10 Nautical miles offshore. He added that fishers were asked to avoid fishing in the no take zone until the open season to allow fish spawning and breeding. He pointed out that his office organized

meetings with women oyster and cockle harvesters in Kabajo and Niafrang who are sharing the fishery stock with Kartong to take management measures for sustainable exploitation of the resources. He said the mission will be a catalyst to their effort to bring sustainable management measures for oyster and cockle fishery in Allahein estuary for the benefit of women oyster and cockle harvesters in the Gambia and Senegal. He informed the delegation that kafunting and Abene communities do not engage in oyster and cockle harvesting. These two communities are engaged in fishing and snail collection. He suggested one officer from his office to join the tour to attend meeting in the communities to show their collaboration with TRY.

The mission arrived at Donbondir and headed to the Alkali's compound where TRY President Jarra Kujabi from Kubuneh oyster harvesting community was on family visit. The oyster and cockle harvesters, Alkali, Village elders and youths were in attendance at the meeting. The Coordinator of TRY Oyster women Association expressed delight for their attendance and she outlined the objective of the visit. The Alkali lamented the low turnout of women at the meeting as they were busy with preparation for an annual festival in the Village. Jarra Kujabi then highlighted TRY activities and support to oyster women in the Gambia. The attendees showed interest in taking measures for conservation and sustainable exploitation of oyster and cockle resources in the Allahein estuary. They promised to collaborate with TRY for the improvement of their livelihood. After the meeting the delegation paid visit to the National Assembly Member for the region who came to attend the festival in Donbondir.



Fatou explained to the Honorable Lady Member of the Senegalese National Assembly the objective of the visit to the oyster and cockle harvesting communities in Southern Senegal who share the oyster and cockle stock with Kartong in the Allahein estuary. The Honorable Lady expressed happiness to receive TRY delegation in her constituency with noble objective to uplift the status of oyster and cockle harvesters and conservation of the resources for their benefit and generations unborn. The Honorable Member for the was told the delegation that they have been engaged in mangrove replanting to protect the environment and in communities in her

constituency and the Senegalese Government supports the effort of TRY in the preparation of the Joint Transboundary Co Management Plan for oyster and cockle fishery. The Honorable Member exchanged address card with the Coordinator of TRY to correspond with her for the realization of the Plan.



The mission left Donbondir for Katak and arrived at the Alkali's compound in the afternoon. The women oyster and Cockle harvester, village elders and youths converged at the Alkali's compound for the meeting. Fatou spoke briefly about the objective of the meeting and the attendants expressed appreciation for the TRY visit and said it was long overdue. Some attendees who were many times in the Gambia to attend TRY meetings showed happiness that Fatou came to their community to replicate what she has done for oyster and cockle harvesters in the Gambia. They expressed their support and willingness to collaborate with TRY and Senegalese officials for the preparation of the Joint Transboundary Co Management Plan for oyster and

cockle in the Allahein estuary. The meeting ended in excitement and the delegation departed for Abene.



The last day of the visit was 11<sup>th</sup> January 2014 and the delegation left Abene in the morning and arrived in Kabajo. The meeting was held at the village square. The attendees included Alkali, village elders, youths and women oyster and cockle harvesters. The Coordinator of TRY

Oyster women Association expressed delight for their attendance and she outlined the objective of the visit. The Alkali welcome the delegation to Kabajo and expressed happiness for having such an important meeting in Kabajo. The objective of which meeting was clearly spelt by the delegation that will bring development in their communities. The Alkali said implementation of sustainable management measures in the exploitation of oyster and cockle in Allahein estuary will improve the ecosystem and livelihood. Other speakers in the community expressed similar sentiments and promised to collaborate with TRY to prepare the Joint transboundary Co Management Plan for oyster and cockle in Allahein estuary.

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## **Conclusion**

The three day visit to six oyster and cockle harvesting communities in Southern Senegal by the TRY Oyster Women Association was very successful. All the six oysters and cockle harvesting communities were visited and meetings held. All the communities showed interest in the sustainable management of oyster and cockle fishery in Allahein estuary. They all acknowledged that the shared stock of oyster and cockle requires co management strategy for their benefit and future generation that will have a felt need for it. The communities agreed to collaborate with

TRY to hold future meetings and reach consensus on management measures, bye laws and conservation of the mangrove ecosystem.

The Department of Fisheries in Abene was visited and TRY was assured of their collaboration for the preparation of the Joint Transboundary Co Management Plan.

The meeting with the Honorable Member of Parliament in Senegalese Government was a breakthrough for TRY. The Honorable Member pledged support and collaboration with TRY in all areas of sustainable development. She assured TRY that Government of Senegal will provide backstop to the initiative of TRY.



*Following the tour to Southern Senegal The Allahein Kafoo convened meeting at Kartong fisheries Centre at the oyster and cockle landing site, 12<sup>th</sup> January, 2014. The communities visited in Southern Senegal sent delegation to come and attend a general meeting. The Allahein Kafoo comprises oyster and cockle harvesting communities from Southern Senegal and The Gambia. The communities from Southern Senegal include Niafrang, Kabajo, Donbondir, Katak, Mamouda and Boudouk. The communities on the Gambian side are Kartong and*

*Berending. The oyster and cockle harvesters from both Southern Senegal and The Gambia share the oyster and cockle resources In the Allahein estuary. The water body serves as a natural boundary between the two countries which has crossing points either by boat or on foot at low lower tide. Oyster and cockle harvesting has become the livelihood of peoples living near the Allahein estuary since time immemorial. The fishery creates employment, income and revenue and provides food security as well. The importance of the Allahein estuary to the peoples living near and beyond cannot be down played. However, the oyster and cockle resources is declining as a result of over exploitation and bad practice in oyster harvesting and cockle collection. To reverse the trend, management measures must be put in place through the process of co management to ensure sustainable fishery. sustainable fishery.*

### **Attendance**

*At the start of the meeting, remembrance prayer was said for Ousman Drammeh,RIP. The meeting was chaired by Dr.Banja and in attendance were Fatou janha TRY Coordinator, Babandin Kanyi DoFishd,Gibril Gabis DoFish,Jalang Camara TRY Accounts,Ebrima Jabang DoFish, Isatou Sambou TRY President, oyster cockle harvesters from six communities in Southern Senegal and two communities in the Gambia, youths and local leaders.*

### **Out put**

*Dr.Banja underscored the importance of the Allahein estuary for providing livelihood for oyster and cockle harvesters from Southern Senegal and the Gambia. Therefore, it is necessary to have discussion with the Southern Senegalese counter parts on management issues so as to attain a sustainable fishery. He narrated the evolution of TRY Association and its structure, and then pointed out bye laws and management measures in the Oyster and cockle Plan prepared by TRY Oyster Women in collaboration with stakeholders. He went on to say that all that issue was done in a participatory approach until consensus was obtained. He pointed out that the processes involved bottom top approach and not top bottom. Dr.Banja told the participants that it is a similar approach to employ for preparation of the Joint Transboundary Co Management Plan for oyster and cockle in Allahein estuary shared by the two countries. He stressed that sustainable fisheries management will benefit the resource users today and in the future. He added that the government of Senegal will be involved when it comes to formalization. He asked them to select committees in the groups and formalizes and gets institutionalized.*

*Fatou Janha spoke about activities of TRY Association of the past years and its profile. She expressed happiness about the presence of youths that should carry the message home and disseminate. In her concluding remarks she urged the participants to involved young educated boys and girls in their associations.*

*Fatou Jabang of Berending,Therese Jasey of Niafrang,Njemeh of Kabajo and Marie Jatta of Katak all expressed willingness to cooperate with TRY for the sustainable management of oyster and cockles in the Allahein estuary. They pledged to go back to their various communities to establish oyster and cockle associations and sensitize others who were not at the meeting on resource management issue discussed at the Kartong meeting.*

*Dr. Banja expressed confidence that the people from Southern Senegal would be able to form strong oyster and cockle associations in their communities. He cautioned them to select reliable and charismatic persons to form leadership of their associations.*

*Fatou then pointed out that leadership of associations is temporal with term limit of two years as in TRY. She added that every two years the president of TRY steps down and a new president is elected by the members.*

*Botondingo Gassama, an elderly man from Kabajo dilated on close relationship between people from Southern Senegal and Kartong and Berending, that they are the same people divided only by the political boundary. He said there are Mandingo and Jola tribes in both areas living together for many centuries. However, he pointed out that it is not easy to bring together people of two different compounds, talk less of two countries. He urged the participants to take matter seriously and collaborate with each other in Southern Senegal and TRY Association for sustainable management of the shared stock of oyster and cockles.*

*Jerry, the white lady working with Kartong Responsible Tourism, NGO called KART came to the meeting with a co worker and expressed happiness to meeting Fatou Janha for the first time, though she heard of TRY. She informed the meeting that she is involved in many development programmes in the Gambia and was pleasing to see peoples of two countries meeting to discuss about management of the river which is the live blood where people get their livelihood and tourist are please to visit river side.*



