



POLICY BRIEF

Emergency and Recovery Interventions against effects of COVID-19 pandemic and extreme flooding on fisheries sectors in the IGAD region



The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) region, like many other developing regions, is likely facing severe food shortages from interruptions of the supply chains due to the COVID-19 pandemic control and mitigation measures put in place to control the spread, combined with the massive economic impacts of these necessary measures.

CONTENTS

Background	2
Fisheries and aquaculture sector in the IGAD region	3
Purpose of this Policy brief	4
Basis for the assessment and interventions against effects of calamities	4
Suggested interventions against effects of the calamities	5
Proposed emergency phase interventions (within one year)	5
Proposed recovery phase interventions (medium to long term-> one year to five year)	6
Conclusion	8



“ According to IGAD, the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak and extreme flooding events in the region have exacerbated the situation “exerting additional pressure to an already fragile economic situation”

BACKGROUND

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) region, like many other developing regions, is likely facing severe food shortages from interruptions of the supply chains due to the COVID-19 pandemic control and mitigation measures put in place to control the spread, combined with the massive economic impacts of these necessary measures. This has led to proximate causes of emergency compounded by the civil strife, natural disaster, and the arrival of locusts and plagues in the region that preceded COVID-19 pandemic causing additional stresses in many contexts.

The United Nations recognizes that there are “also deep structural problems in the way our food systems function” that require attention for countries to be able to address the food emergencies. IGAD is firstly focused on ensuring food and nutrition security and as such has identified the agricultural sector (crops, livestock and fisheries), as one of the three priority development areas. This is coupled with ensuring and supporting sustainable management of natural resources and protecting the environment. Agriculture is reported by IGAD Secretariat (IGAD, 2020) as the most dominant component of economies of the IGAD Member States in terms of its contribution to their respective “GDP, food and nutrition security, supplies of raw materials for industry, employment, income and exports”. IGAD also recognizes the impact of frequent droughts, desertification, environmental degradation and

climate change on the predominantly rural subsistence agricultural and pastoral economies of Member States, a situation which worsen the food emergency situation in the region. According to IGAD, the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak and extreme flooding events in the region have exacerbated the situation “exerting additional pressure to an already fragile economic situation” (IGAD, 2020), given the natural and social calamities that befell the region in 2019. The impacts of these hazards are therefore a focus of emergency and recovery action for the region as they threaten and appear to be impacting millions of livelihoods and further upending the vulnerability and weakening of resilience.

The combined impacts could be shrinkage in fisheries value chain and its contribution to food and nutrition security in the region yet fisheries is considered critical element for food and nutrition security and major source of livelihoods in IGAD region. IGAD therefore recognizes the development of the fisheries sector in the region as necessary in making significant contribution in “reducing vulnerability of communities to climatic and economic shocks by creating income opportunities and enhancing resilience to food and nutrition insecurity”. However, the two occurrences including the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak and associated containment measures experienced since December 2019 and the extreme flooding events experienced over the last 18 months crises have been identified by IGAD as requiring additional, stepped-up efforts for monitoring and assessing its impact, and putting in place emergency measures to track

and forestall nutritional impacts of the pandemic response and economic shock on fisheries subsector of Member States of IGAD.

It is projected that the COVID-19 pandemic containment/lockdown measures have affected food producers and consumers, and have disrupted the supply chains and the flows of agricultural commodities within and across countries. With the disruption of food supply chains, which in part is due to public health responses to curtail the virus and or damage to physical and production infrastructure by the extreme flooding events, fish supply has been negatively affected as the entire fish chain

has been impacted at both input and output stages. These impacts range from falling fish production, loss of jobs and income from lockdowns which causes the rise of fish prices, which in turn affects the public health systems, access to fishing inputs and feeds for fishing/farming operations, availability of ice and functional cold storage networks, post-harvest loss and food waste, labour shortage for onshore and offshore operations, increasing food prices in grocery stores as a result of panic buying, and disruption in shipping traffic. Knowing that most countries rely on import of fish products and regional trade, this creates a food security crisis that requires complementary nutritional well-being interventions. The same holds true for the IGAD region.

IGAD, as a Regional Economic Community, has the comparative advantage to analyse the impact of COVID-19 on fish value chains and provide policy guidance in a coordinated manner with Member States. An assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on fisheries, as a major component of the Blue Economy sector, would also contribute to knowing the impact of COVID-19 on the Blue Economy of the region.

FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE SECTOR IN THE IGAD REGION

Although fisheries sector is a minor contributor to GDP of most Member States of IGAD, it is a major contributor in terms of livelihoods and supply of household dietary animal protein to millions of people in the region. Fish and aquatic products have also become a major commodity for national and intraregional trade albeit still mainly informal. It is also a major export earner for a number of the Member States trading with international markets such as EU, USA, Saudi Arabia and Japan. With the increased value and role of fish in Member States, fisheries in some areas of the IGAD region are however reeling from overfishing, environmental degradation, fishing malpractices, IUU fishing and capture and dealing in illicit undersized fish, as well as increasing exposure to natural and socioeconomic calamities such as extreme

flooding and COVID-19 pandemic as is currently being experienced. The fisheries resources are also facing the effect of climate change across the region with stocks severely reduced or even collapsed (FAO, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions due to COVID-19 pandemic mitigation measures, and the extreme flooding events that have taken place in the region over the last two years pose even greater threats to fisheries role in terms of its contribution to food security and nutrition with likely disruption of established local, regional and international fish markets, supply of inputs, enforcement and monitoring of fisheries exploitation, diminishing engagement of women and youth in value chain, and loss of livelihoods with resultant loss of critical access to fishery products and loss in income sources.

“ the policy brief aims to inform the stakeholders on findings of the assessment of the impact of the calamities of COVID-19 pandemic and extreme flooding events on the fish value chain in IGAD region



PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY BRIEF

The policy brief provides a basis and justification for and calls for policy attention and action on the proposed interventions and activities for mitigating effects of calamities on fisheries sectors of Member States. Moreover, the policy brief aims to inform the stakeholders on

findings of the assessment of the impact of the calamities of COVID-19 pandemic and extreme flooding events on the fish value chain in IGAD region; and the proposed intervention packages for two phases (Emergency and Recovery) in mitigating the effects of the calamities.

BASIS FOR THE ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTIONS AGAINST EFFECTS OF CALAMITIES

Following the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, the IGAD Secretariat sought resources from EU and funded a consultancy project undertaken by consultant, to carry out a regional study for “Assessment on the Impact of COVID-19 pandemic and extreme flooding events on Fish Value Chain and Development of Interventions Packages in IGAD Member States”. The consultancy project examined the effects of COVID-19 and flooding on fisheries sector in seven IGAD Member States to gauge the effect of the two calamities on fishing industry especially that which concerns the most vulnerable communities so as to guide devising of appropriate interventions for mitigation of the effects and impact of these disasters. The study showed that small-scale fisheries underpin the aquatic food fish supply, and are facing acute challenges in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and extreme flooding events. The findings also have shown that

the calamities severely damaged the physical and technological infrastructure in respective Member States especially with extreme flooding events, wiping out fishing villages and destroying fisheries production and management facilities, and damaging aquaculture production facilities. The COVID-19 containment measures including strict lockdown measures were found to be highly limiting to fishing activities, seriously disrupted the fish production inputs supply lines, movement of labour, and transportation of fishery products to the markets. Given this dynamic, controlling COVID-19 and mitigating effects of extreme flooding as well as supporting opportunities for fishing industry actors to safely return to their livelihood and business activities is paramount to the emergency and recovery interventions needed for fisheries sectors in respective Member States, especially assistance to small-scale fishing and fish farming communities.

SUGGESTED INTERVENTIONS AGAINST EFFECTS OF THE CALAMITIES

IGAD region currently depends mainly on artisanal fishing, with some effort to modernise the downstream activities of, handling, processing, preserving and marketing of the fishery products including to regional and international markets. The small-scale fisheries industry in particular has been affected by combined calamities of extreme flooding events and COVID-19 pandemic outbreak and associated mitigation measures against the spread of the disease. To effectively recover and rebuild the fish production industries for IGAD Member States which are predominantly based on small-scale fisheries, there is need for both immediate and long term actions.

PROPOSED EMERGENCY PHASE INTERVENTIONS (WITHIN ONE YEAR)

Below is an outline of emergency measures proposed by stakeholders including fisher folks, fish producers, processors and traders, responsible government agencies and technical experts in the seven Member States surveyed:

A. Support to fisherfolk

- Provide relief items to disaster affected lower cadre fisheries workers (fishermen, support workers, fishmongers, artisan fish processors and those working in fish processing establishments) in form of food, clothing, health supplies, and shelter for those who were displaced or relocated in response to the calamities;
- Provide drinking water and or systems for treating of and containers for supply of potable water for domestic use to affected fishing communities;
- Undertake financial support schemes to assist fisherfolk including fishermen, fish farmers, fish traders and suppliers, and fish processors (artisan and industrial) to compensate for losses in demand through campaigns to promote the consumption of fishery products; anti-bilharzia tablets, and temporary sanitary facilities for those affected by extreme flooding;
- Train leaders and technical managers of fisher communities in basic management and control of effects of COVID-19 pandemic and effects of extreme flooding;
- Support fishers with inputs like fishing gears and boats especially those that lost all their savings because of lockdown and cannot resume fishing;
- Institute government purchases of fish through fishmongers or artisan fish processors as part of food relief packages for refugees, IDPs and disaster affected communities. This will also help to combat malnutrition and micronutrient deficiency and boost demand for fish;
- Provide alternative livelihood options and assist with livelihood diversification to primary producers including fishermen and fish farmers.

B. Support to rehabilitation of fisheries management and fish production infrastructure

- Promote and reinforce the use of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for mitigating effects of COVID-19 pandemic including handwashing, social distancing and quarantining and treating of the persons identified to have the disease;

C. Support to fisheries and aquaculture management and development institutions

- Provide the public with a transparent, stable, and reliable source of information to restore back the trust and confidence of consumers as soon as possible;
- Provide real time information using Geographical Information System and aerial maps of floating mass vegetation bodies to guide fishers and fish farmers so as to protect their production facilities and gears;
- Harmonise fisheries response to COVID-19 measures across the region;
- Provide technical assistance and support for use of modern communication technologies to allow for virtual meetings, remote sensing and data collection, and communicating and informing the users of fisheries information;
- Conduct emergency repairs of physical and technological infrastructure damaged by extreme flooding and or as a result of periods of disuse during the COVID-19
- Institute and enforce quality control and assurance mechanisms and processes in harvesting, handling, processing and marketing of fish for all markets (local, national, pandemic associated lockdown; regional and international);

D. Support to private sector

- Facilitate access to micro-finance or aid to promote the resumption of activity of small fishermen and women fish sellers
- Install test kits (screening for COVID-19) and possibly vaccination where possible to critical workers such as fishermen, fishing support workers, artisan fish processors and fishmongers
- Support fishers to add value to fish products through processing and drying, so that they can receive a higher share of profits from sales
- Promote and scale-up mobile or online marketing and home deliveries of fish, to encourage demand from urban consumers
- Provide affordable and readily accessible financing for repair and rebuilding of fisheries businesses, fishing infrastructure, farmed fish production facilities, fish processing units
- Promote use of simple, alternative technologies for production, farming, handling, processing, preserving, storage and marketing of fish and fishery products
- Work with financing institutions to restructure existing loans and funding repayment to allow fishers and downstream fisheries businesses to repair and recover from the effect of the calamities

PROPOSED RECOVERY PHASE INTERVENTIONS (MEDIUM TO LONG TERM-> ONE YEAR TO FIVE YEAR)

In order for the fishing industries of each of the seven IGAD Member States to recover from effects of extreme weather events and other environmental, social and economic shocks, as well as incorporate resilience to responding and handling future calamities, the stakeholders from the surveyed affected seven countries proposed the following recovery interventions;

A. Fisher folk

- Fund and develop training materials for use in communities to strengthen their capacity to manage the stresses or shocks related to the pandemic;
- Favour the value chain approach to ensure sufficient information and analysis of the value chain and methods to reduce post-harvest losses and this for a suitable assistance to women to develop their work in the fisheries value chain and increase their resilience;
- Establish a funding mechanism to diversify the livelihoods of fishing communities or create jobs outside of fishing;
- Support smallholder aquaculture investments so as to improve access to fish for communities and remote areas that are far removed from fisheries water bodies;
- Promote adoption of better production technologies that are not prone to flooding and or effects of hazards such as COVID-19 pandemic;
- Strengthen social protection and social safety net programs for the fishing and fish farming communities and fisheries workers;

B. Fisheries Management and Production Infrastructure

- Repair and/or re-establish fish handling and quality control facilities damaged by flooding;
- Support the repair and construction of access roads to landing sites and other public fisheries infrastructures or areas of concentrated fish production;
- Support the establishments of substations on the different fisheries water bodies for better monitoring and coordinating of fisheries activities including disaster preparedness and management;

C. Institutional Support

- Support fisheries and aquaculture institutions with ICT facilities and software packages and adopt digitalization to ease access and exchange of information with fisheries and aquaculture businesses as well as in monitoring and controlling fisheries and aquaculture activities
- Implementation of information tools on this pandemic to share information between decision-makers and fishing communities
- Support the development of national contingency plans for fisheries and aquaculture industries
- Support the development of specific policies and interventions for promoting of co-management and appropriate technologies to curb the fisheries post-harvest losses that occur during and in the aftermath of calamities such as extreme flooding and COVID-19 pandemic
- Integrate into future laws, strategies, policies and national plans good practices for disaster management and preparedness as well as risk management of calamities such as COVID-19 pandemic and extreme flooding events
- Support updating of fisheries and aquaculture data to allow for meaningful planning and engagement by public and private sector in business of fish production and marketing
- Establish early warning system and risk and disaster preparedness plans



Support the development of specific policies and interventions for promoting of co-management and appropriate technologies to curb the fisheries post-harvest losses that occur during and in the aftermath of calamities such as extreme flooding and COVID-19 pandemic

D. Private Sector

- Support and attract more private sector players to invest more in the aquaculture sector, notably businesses involved with fish sector inputs and fish products to bolster demand
- Implementation of a mechanism using input tax exemptions and deferrals of payment of fishing patents or licenses in order to reduce the costs incurred by the communities involved in fishing
- Put in place fiscal and technical incentives such as deferral of payment of fishing licenses or licenses and waiver of taxes so as to promote production and or importation of fish production facilities and inputs
- Support private sector and fishers and fish farmers producer organizations to establish appropriate or improve the capacity and quality of existing cold chain and dry-stores for fish

E. Financial support and inclusion

- Support the emergency of affordable and sustainable local or indigenous funding solutions for fishing activities and businesses so as to improve coping capacity for the fishing industry to natural and socioeconomic calamities and disasters
- Extend agricultural insurance system to fisheries and aquaculture industries so as to help farmers handle and deal with the effects of natural disasters
- Waive levies and tax obligations for established fish processing and exporting factories tied to boosting processing and export so as to recover and increase fish production



Sources of Information

1. FAO (2018). Impacts of Climate Change on fisheries and aquaculture. FAO Technical paper 627, Rome.
2. Field survey data for the fisheries sectors of the seven Member States
3. Fisheries production statistics from the responsible fisheries management agencies
4. IGAD Emergency and Recovery Mitigation ToR (2020).
5. IGAD Strategy and Plan for the fisheries sector
6. World Health Organization assessment and national reports on COVID-19 pandemic
7. FAO and national reports on extreme flooding and fisheries
8. National fisheries policies and strategies

Conclusion

Based on the assessment of survey findings as to the effects of the multiple calamities and their impact, there is urgent need for action to mitigate the impact to the fisheries and aquaculture sectors of the seven Member States.

The assessment shows that the fishing communities and fisheries businesses along the value chain have been severely impacted by COVID-19 pandemic and extreme flooding events with some areas facing a high level of humanitarian crisis.

The high level of vulnerability reported especially at the fishing production level, if not addressed urgently, is likely to result immediate and long-lasting impacts including loss of life, displacement of people, resource conflicts, surge in ill health and insecurity on the waters leading to increase in internal displacements, starvation and malnutrition.



INTERGOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY ON DEVELOPMENT

Avenue Georges Clemenceau, P.O. Box 2653, Djibouti, Republic of Djibouti

Tel: +253 21 33 02 12 - E-mail: info@igad.int - www.igad.int

Published by IGAD Agriculture & Environment Division

Funded by the Technical Cooperation Fund (TCF), European Union

With the support of EEOFISH - www.ecofish-programme.org