



African Confederation of Professional Organizations of Artisanal Fisheries

CAOPA Declaration

International Women's Day

08 March 2021

One year after the Covid 19 pandemic, women in African artisanal fisheries suffer but continue to feed the population

We, women professionals in the African artisanal fisheries sector, have never experienced a crisis that has affected our activities as profoundly as the Covid 19 pandemic.

For a year now, we have been dealing with it.

We have been surviving for a year now.

The measures that our governments have put in place to curb the spread of covid-19 have disrupted our supply to fishermen, who could no longer go out fishing, and our processing and marketing activities made difficult by curfews, lockdown and border closures.

FAO itself stressed at the Committee on Fisheries last February that artisanal fish workers are the hardest hit by this crisis *'because they do not have enough capital to weather the storm, but also because they depend on fishing for their daily food and livelihood and lack access to health services'*.

As we have been stressing CAOPA since the beginning of the pandemic, this crisis must be the detonator, the opportunity to improve in the long term the hygiene and working conditions of men and women of artisanal fisheries.

Improving the working conditions of women in African artisanal fisheries must be the priority of the measures that will be taken by our countries for the post-Covid 19 economic recovery.

Today, most women in African artisanal fisheries work in unhealthy conditions for a miserable income. This is no longer acceptable. For women in artisanal fisheries, like fishermen, have been essential workers since the beginning of the pandemic.

Without artisanal fishing, without women of artisanal fishing, how many millions of our fellow Africans would have been deprived of fish for food?

Fish remains an essential source of animal protein, micro-nutrients and fatty acids, which is of paramount importance in low-income countries and small island states in Africa, where diets are largely based on fish. We, women of artisanal fisheries, are the ones who bring the fish from the fisher to the African consumer.

This crisis has shown the irreplaceable role of African artisanal fisheries and women who work in them, for food and nutritional security.

It is therefore fundamental that our countries become aware of this and protect the fishing areas of our fishermen, our landing and processing sites, too often against the predation of other industries that exploit our coasts.

Our countries must make a strong commitment to improving the working and living conditions of women in artisanal fisheries, using the FAO Guidelines for Sustainable Artisanal Fisheries as a guide, and building on the experience, innovation, commitment and strength of women in fisheries.

Providing decent living and working conditions for women in artisanal fisheries is more necessary than ever to avoid food crises and to ensure the stability of coastal communities in Africa.