



Walmom

DeSIRA  
PARTNERSHIPS  
FOR INNOVATION



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Mangroves, mangrove rice and mangrove people –  
sustainably improving rice production, ecosystems and livelihoods  
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## Final workshop

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School of Agriculture, University of Lisbon, Portugal

## Mangroves, Markets, Marginalization: Mangrove Fishing Transformations among the Balanta in Coastal Guinea-Bissau

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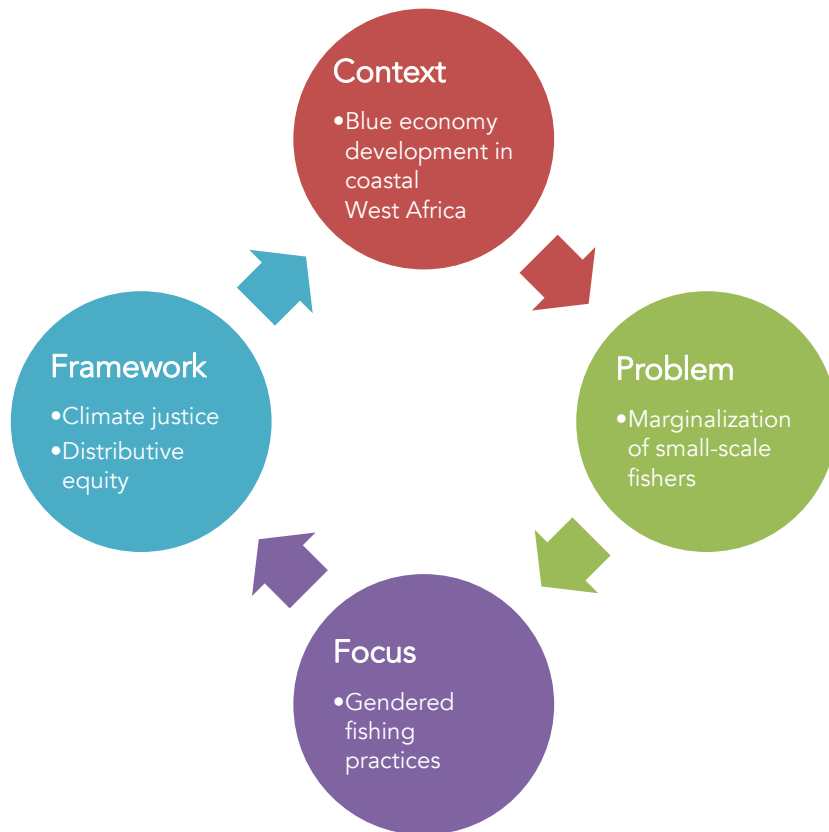
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# Introduction & Objectives



# Literature Background

- Blue economy:
  - Sustainability vs commodification (Mulazzani & Malorgio, 2017; Barbesgaard, 2018)
- Exclusion of small-scale fishers
- Gender gaps in fisheries (Kleiber et al., 2014)



**Economia  
Azul** Pa um futuro mas  
prosperu  
Guiné-Bissau



## National **Blue Economy** Strategy and Investment Plan for Guinea Bissau **2024-2030**



Mulazzani, L., & Malorgio, G. (2017). Blue growth and ecosystem services. *Marine Policy* 85: 17-24

Barbesgaard, M. 2018. Blue growth: savior or ocean grabbing? *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 45(1): 130-149

Kleiber, D., Harris, L. M., & Vincent, A. C. (2014). Gender and small-scale fisheries: A case for counting women and beyond. *Fish and Fisheries* 15(2): 255-279

# Why Justice Matters in the Blue Economy Context

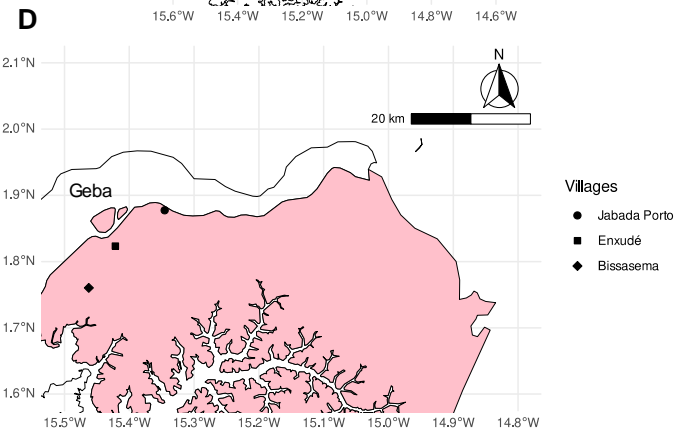
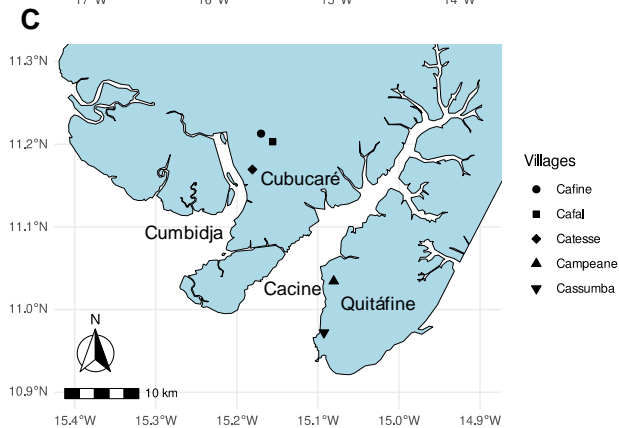
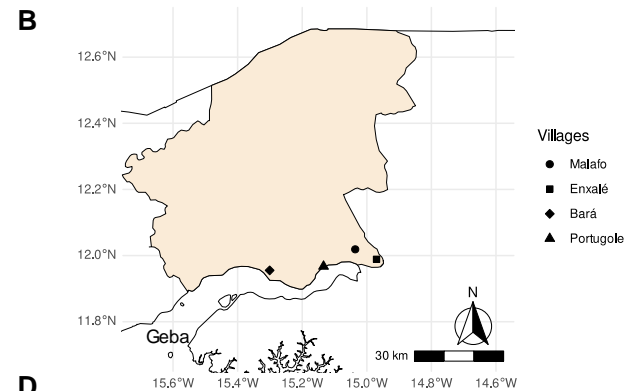
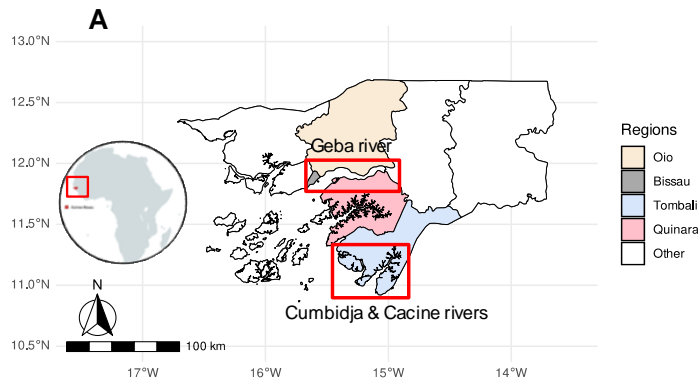
Justice approaches **push back against "blue / fish grabbing"**—the enclosure of oceans for markets—and re-center development around people, not just GDP growth.

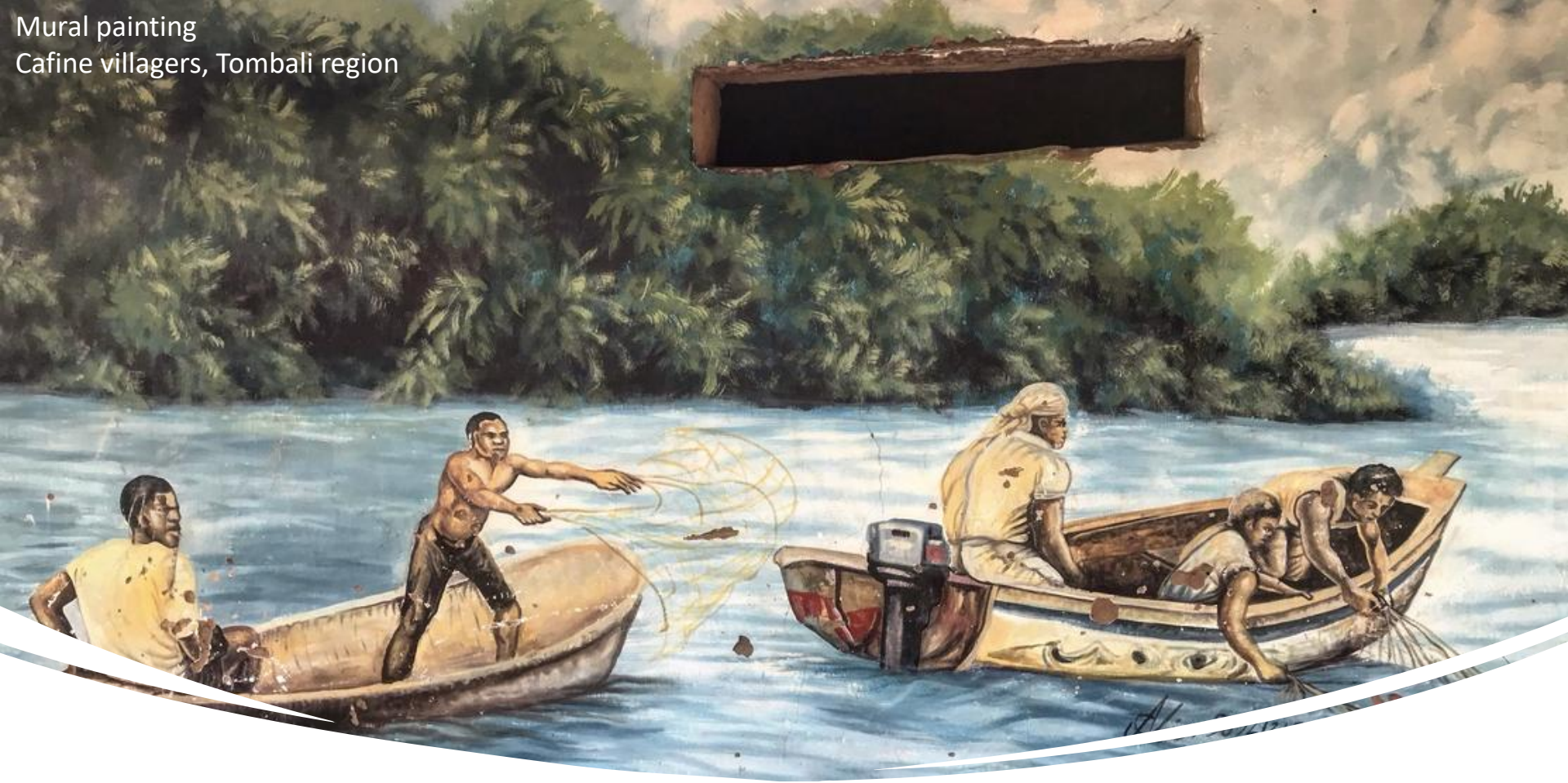
They create more **resilient, equitable, and ecologically viable** fisheries systems.



# Study Area

- Guinea-Bissau: Oio, Quinara, Tombali
- Mangrove estuarine ecosystems
- Balanta ethnic group
- Rivers: Mansoa, Geba, Cacine, Cumbidja





# Methodology

- Mixed methods: surveys, FGDs, interviews
- 444 households surveyed
- R Studio + thematic content analysis
- Ethnographic fieldwork: 14 months (2021–2024)



# Historical Gender Roles

Livelihoods: food security & informal trade

- Women
  - nearshore fishing, gleaning (tilapia, crabs)
- Men
  - Mangrove swamp rice farming





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## Globalized Fishing Economies

- 1980s liberalization: market fishing
- Knowledge exchange from Pepel ethnic group (Oio region) or foreign fishermen (Tombali) to Balanta
- Influx of foreign artisanal fishers (Guinea Conakry, Senegal, etc.)

*"We taught them [the Balanta] how to set the lines, how to follow the fish in the river. Fishing wasn't about money at first, but when the market opened, they saw how much they could earn."*

(Pepel Elder, Oio)





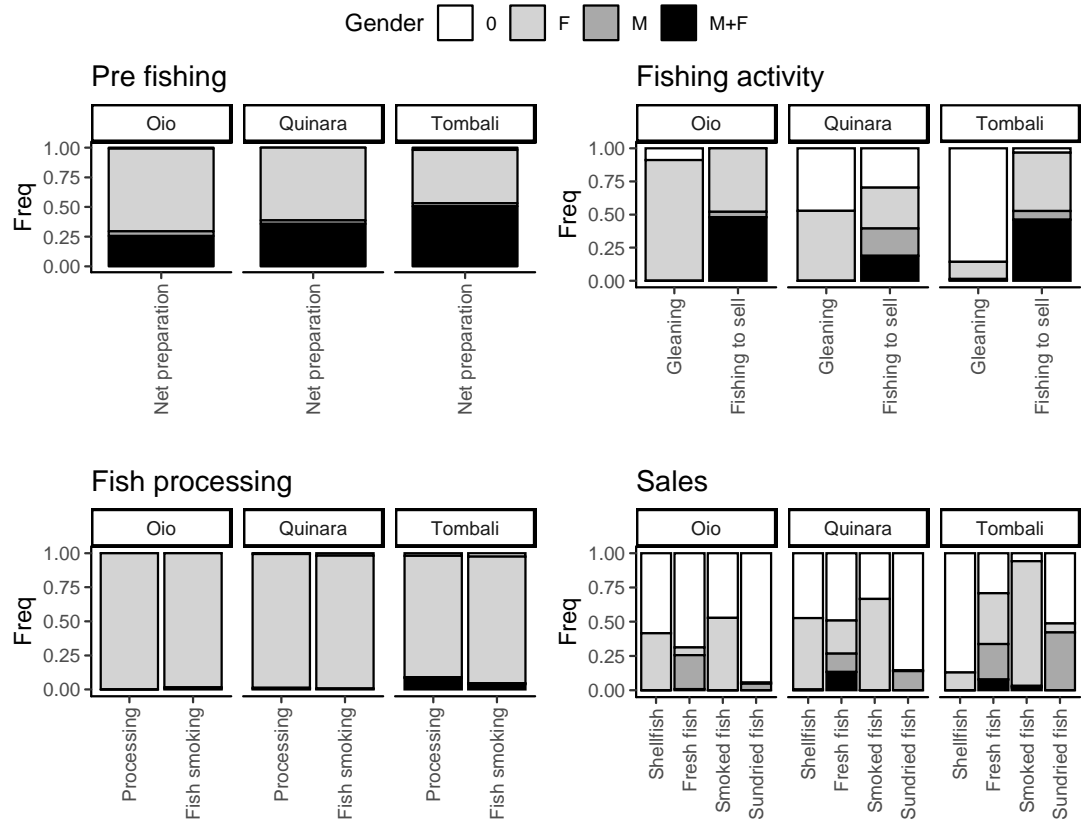
## Case Studies of Change

- **Oio**
  - Mansoa: fish scarcity post-bridge construction
  - Mansoa: Fiddler crab (*Uca tangeri*) economy by women, men almost do not fish
  - Geba: Catfish (*Carlarius* spp.) fishing
- **Quinara**
  - Catfish (*Carlarius* spp.) fishing and smoking
- **Tombali**
  - Fishing as a last resort for survival
  - Cubucaré: Djotto (*Pseudotolithus elongatus*) contract fishing by men
  - Quitáfine: Women smoke and sell fish caught by foreign fishermen who take it back to their home country



# Gendered Value Chains

- Women: processing & smoked fish trade
- Men: larger, "high quality" fish for foreign markets
- Women gain more in some segments



# Fish Processing & Smoking

Smoke ovens using mangrove wood  
Clay pot storage  
Transport to capital Bissau & regional towns



# Fishing in Precarity

- Nets: mosquito (unsustainable), nylon (costly)
- Drivers:
  - Poor cashew/rice harvests
  - Increased fishing pressure
  - Declining aquatic resources

*"If we had Nylon nets, we would stop using the mosquito nets because we know that we are damaging the environment, and we don't want problems with the Park people. But we also need money."*

(fisherwomen, Cafine village)



# Fishing in Precarity

*"There are way more fishermen now, but fewer fish.  
The motorboats make noise and scare the fish away.  
It's not like before when there were only a few people fishing."  
(fisherman from Tombali)*

♀



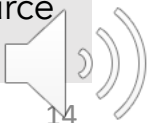
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# Policy Gaps

- IUU fishing, contract fishing
- Lack of support for artisanal fishers
- Exclusion of women

Key Policy Areas	Recommendations
Strengthen Fisheries Governance	Implement and enforce stricter regulations against IUU (Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated) fishing while prioritizing artisanal fishers' access to marine resources and their participation in SSF inspection teams.
Ensure Equitable Resource Distribution	Develop policies that prevent "fish grabbing" by foreign fleets and guarantee fair resource access for national small-scale fishers.
Support Sustainable Artisanal Fishing	Reduce the price of licenses, provide financial assistance for all inputs and create training programs for both genders.
Promote Gender-Inclusive Fisheries Management	Recognize and support women's contributions across fisheries value chains, ensuring their participation in decision-making processes related to fishery management and governance.
Increase Community Participation in Policymaking	Foster inclusive governance models that incorporate local knowledge and ensure community-driven natural resource management.



# Conclusion

- Adaptability of gender roles
- Blue economy = risks of exclusion
- Criminalization of local fishers
- Justice-based governance needed





# Thank you

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Thanks to:  
all Balanta communities  
DeSIRA Malmon project  
Enumerators & local authorities



# EXTRA Justice- based governance

A **justice-based approach** in fisheries governance emphasizes fairness, equity, and recognition of local rights and knowledge. Here's how such an approach can **benefit local fishers**:

## 1. Distributive Justice: Fair Resource Access

- **Problem:** Industrial and foreign fleets often capture most of the value from marine resources, while local fishers face depleted stocks.
- **Justice-based benefit:** Ensure **priority access to fishing grounds** for local, small-scale fishers—especially those with historical reliance—through marine spatial planning and quota systems.
- **Example:** Allocating nearshore areas exclusively for artisanal fishers helps sustain livelihoods and ecosystems.

## 2. Procedural Justice: Participation in Decision-Making

- **Problem:** Policies are often made without involving those most affected.
- **Justice-based benefit:** Empower local fishers—men and women—to **co-create regulations**, sit on fisheries councils, and shape management strategies.
- **Example:** Co-management arrangements where fishers monitor, enforce, and adapt rules are more resilient and accepted.

# EXTRA Justice- based governance

## 3. Recognition Justice: Respect for Traditional Knowledge

- **Problem:** Local ecological knowledge is often dismissed in favor of “scientific” or foreign models.
- **Justice-based benefit:** Formally recognizing traditional fishing calendars, gear preferences, and gendered roles increases legitimacy and compliance.
- Example: Recognizing women’s roles in post-harvest processing or crab harvesting as integral to the fishery—not just auxiliary—supports targeted interventions (e.g., subsidies, training).

## 4. Reparative Justice: Addressing Historical Marginalization

- **Problem:** Decades of exclusion and underinvestment have left many communities in precarity.
- **Justice-based benefit:** Justice frameworks support reparative policies, such as subsidized equipment, training, or access to credit.
- Example: Supporting women-led fish smoking enterprises with improved ovens and market access helps offset past economic and policy neglect.

# EXTRA Justice- based governance

## 5. Environmental Justice: Linking Conservation and Livelihoods

- **Problem:** Conservation zones often restrict (traditional) access without alternatives.
- **Justice-based benefit:** Policies that balance ecological goals with livelihood security (e.g., compensation, alternative incomes, seasonal permits) ensure fishers are not **criminalized for survival**.
- Example: Allowing seasonal access to mangrove zones for traditional gleaning, while promoting mangrove replanting co-managed by local groups.