



Mobilising small-scale fishers, Madeira FLAG

Ricardo Oliveira - Costeiro Madeira FLAG



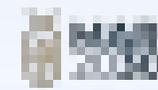
ACAPORAMA
GRUPO DE AÇÃO LOCAL
GAL COSTEIRO

THE BEGINNING OF The Madeira FLAG

“GAL COSTEIRO MADEIRA”

WEBINAR FOR OUTERMOST REGION FLAGS

TECHNICAL - RICARDO OLIVEIRA



Os Açores e Madeira em transição verde



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THE CONTEXT OF THE MADEIRA FLAG

Five Fishing Communities

- Câmara de Lobos
- Caniçal
- Paul do Mar
- Porto Moniz
- Porto Santo

410 active individuals dependent on fishing (Census 2021)

GAL Costeiro Madeira (LAG - Madeira FLAG) was created within the framework of Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) under the Mar 2030 Program, with a community-centered approach focused on fishing communities.

According to the 2021 Census, Caniçal concentrates 246 residents dependent on fishing and Câmara de Lobos 115 residents, highlighting the strategic importance of this activity.

Fishing represents a modest share of the regional GVA, but has an extremely high social, cultural, and identity value, especially within the FLAG intervention area.

TYOLOGY AND CHALLENGES OF SMALL-SCALE FISHERS

Dominant Profile of Small-Scale Fishers



Artisanal Fleet

Small vessels using selective and sustainable gear, reflecting traditional fishing practices passed down through generations



Family Connection

Strong family tradition in the activity, with knowledge and techniques transmitted from parents to children over decades



Pronounced Ageing

Increasingly ageing crews, with low average educational levels and difficulties in generational renewal



Dependence on Species

Focus on a limited number of target species: tuna, black scabbardfish, and small pelagics, increasing economic vulnerability

MAIN CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

Structural



Ageing Fleet

Old vessels with growing maintenance and replacement needs, compromising efficiency and safety.



Poor Working Conditions

Particularly in black scabbardfish fishing. Safety and onboard working conditions are often inadequate, exposing fishers to avoidable risks.



Lack of Generational Renewal

Few young people interested in entering the profession, threatening the continuity of the activity.



Limited Regional Market

A restricted regional market with limited absorption capacity, making it difficult to add value to local fish products.

Economic Weaknesses

Low Product Valorisation

Local fish struggles to differentiate in the market, leading to prices that do not reflect the quality and sustainability of artisanal practices.

Vulnerability to Changes in Migratory Routes

Climate change affects migratory routes of target species, creating unpredictability in catches and income.

Sensitivity to TAC (Total Allowable Catches) and Restrictions

High dependence on fishing quotas and regulatory restrictions.



Dependence on Compensation Schemes such as POSEI-Fisheries

Economic viability strongly depends on support mechanisms such as POSEI-Fisheries, reflecting structural fragility and the need for continued support to maintain active fishing communities.

Social and Environmental Pressures

Low Attractiveness of the Profession

Fishing faces a negative social perception, associated with intense physical work, irregular hours, high risks, and unstable income.

Loss of Maritime Identity Among Younger Generations

Younger generations show growing disconnection from traditional maritime identity, preferring opportunities in tourism and services

Climate Pressure

Climate change alters ocean conditions, affecting species availability and distribution, requiring constant adaptation.

Resource Protection

Need to strengthen monitoring and protection mechanisms to ensure long-term sustainability of marine resources..

OBJECTIVES OF MADEIRA FLAG

A Transformative Strategy

Our approach was not limited to providing funding.

The goal was to **change dynamics** and create conditions for fishing communities to thrive sustainably, respecting their identity while adapting to contemporary challenges.

We identified **five strategic pillars of intervention**, each responding to real needs expressed directly by fishers during the active listening process that preceded the strategy formulation.



FIVE PILLARS OF INTERVENTION

01

Product Valorisation

Market differentiation, promotion of short supply chains, certification, and territorial marketing of local products.

02

Working Conditions and Safety

Light vessel modernisation and improved onboard storage conditions to enhance safety and product quality

03

Income Diversification

Development of complementary activities, maritime-cultural tourism, and experiences linked to fishing identity.

04

Technical Capacity Building

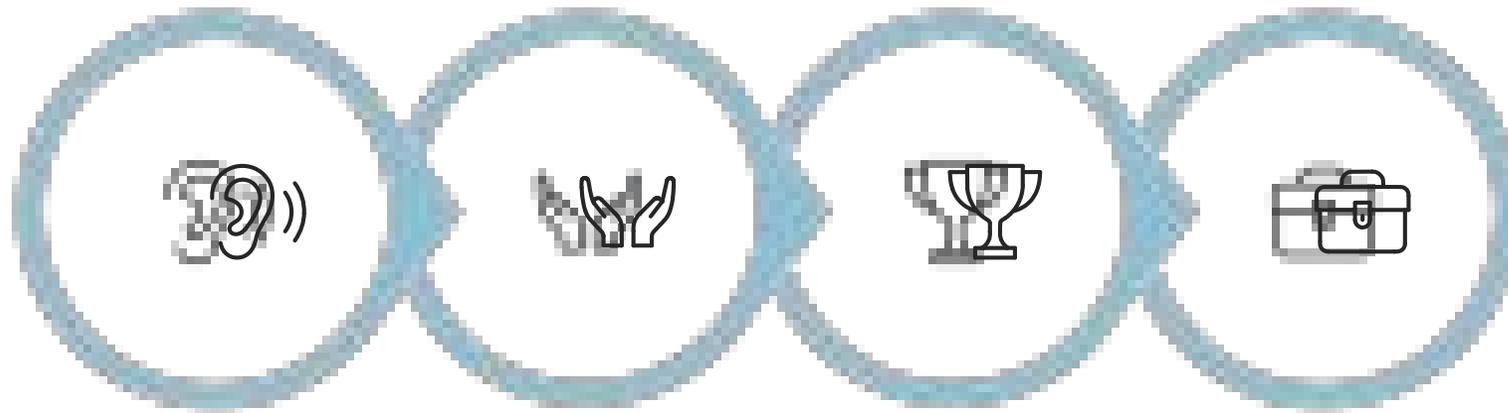
Targeted training, digital literacy, and simplified project management to increase autonomy and skills

05

Strengthening Maritime Identity

Heritage recovery, local events, and cultural preservation

HOW WE ARE BUILDING TRUST WITH FISHERS



Active Listening

**Local Mediation
through People's
Houses
("Casas do Povo")**

**Small Initial
Wins**

**Practical
Capacity
Building**

This was the most critical point of the entire intervention. Without trust, no funding would have had any impact.

Fishing communities have a history of unfulfilled promises and disconnected interventions.

It was essential to demonstrate that this project would be different.



PHASE 1: ACTIVE LISTENING

We did not start by saying, "There are funds available." We started by asking: "What is not working in your activity?"

- Informal meetings with fishers and their families
- Conversations with young fishers and vessel owners
- Meetings with Coopesca – Madeira Fisheries
- Cooperative Regular physical presence in communities
- Simple, non-technical language
- Invitation to some fishers to become FLAG partners

This genuine listening phase allowed us to understand real needs, identify informal leaders, and establish mutual respect.

PHASE 2: LOCAL MEDIATION THROUGH ASSOCIATIONS KNOWN AS “People’s Houses”

The Managing Authority of GAL Costeiro is ACAPORAMA (Association of People’s Houses, “Casas do Povo” of the Autonomous Region of Madeira).

This choice was strategic.

People’s Houses already had:

- Established community trust
- Experience in socio-cultural and socio-economic animation
- Territorial proximity
- Informal mobilisation capacity

They know families, informal leaders, and community customs.

Functions of People’s Houses:

- Social aggregator
- Cultural promoter
- Identity preservation agent
- Application facilitator
- Neutral meeting space

PHASE 3: SMALL INITIAL WINS



We avoided complex projects at the beginning

We avoided complex projects at the beginning, focusing instead on small-scale interventions that could be implemented quickly.



Visible Impact

We prioritised actions with tangible and immediate results, creating concrete examples of success that could be observed by the community.

- Small-scale projects driven by entities close to the local population, such as People's Houses, Parish Councils and Municipalities, Quick interventions, Actions with visible impact and benefits for the Coastal Community (e.g. basic training for fishers and maritime workers, organisation of fish promotion events, tributes to fishers and the cultural identity of the local coastal community, promotion of beach preservation and cleaning, acquisition and installation of self-inflatable aquatic rescue systems).

This is creating:

- Trust
- Replicable examples
- A demonstration effect of what can be achieved

PHASE 4: PRACTICAL CAPACITY BUILDING

Simple Explanatory Sessions Workshops in accessible language, without unnecessary technical jargon	Individual Support Personalised assistance in preparing applications.
Continuous Monitoring Follow-up after approval to ensure successful implementation	Administrative Simplification Removing unnecessary bureaucratic obstacles whenever possible

The role of the FLAG is not only to approve projects — but to provide continuous support.



THE ROLE OF CASAS DO POVO

In outermost regions, trust is not built through distant formal institutions.

Trust is **territorial and relational**.

It emerges from personal relationships, continued presence, and the fulfilment of commitments made.

People's Houses are essential because:

- They are non-profit associations legitimised by members
- Their boards are composed of local community members
- They deal daily with families
- They understand local customs
- They mobilise informally and effectively

They ensure proximity, continuity and territorial outreach, allowing access to fishers who would never have approached a formal technical office.

We believe that without this network, the FLAG would be seen as just another distant instrument.

LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW COASTAL FLAGs

1 **Go to the field first, regulation second**

Trust comes before funding. Invest time in communities before presenting financial instruments.

2 **Work with informal leaders**

Work not only with formal associations, but also identify and engage locally recognised community leaders.

3 **Start small**

Simple and quick projects create credibility and generate a demonstration effect, facilitating future engagement.

4 **Simplify language**

Avoid European and bureaucratic technical jargon. Communicate in a clear, direct and accessible way.

5 **Support beneficiaries after approval**

Post-funding abandonment destroys trust. Maintain presence and support throughout the entire implementation process.

6 **Value identity and culture**

A fisher is not just an economic operator — he is a guardian of cultural heritage and maritime identity.

7 **Promote realistic diversification**

Not everyone wants or can move into tourism. Diversification must respect local profiles and aspirations.

CONCLUSION

GAL Costeiro Madeira did not begin with a significant budget (€200,000 over five years)

But it began with:

- Proximity
- Listening
- Territorial mediation
- Respect for fishing identity

The greatest asset of a FLAG is not its budget. It is trust.

In outermost regions, trust is built slowly —but once built, it transforms communities.

Thank you for your attention!

