



REGIONAL COOPERATION TO STOP ILLEGAL FISHING

A TALE OF TWO TASK FORCES



West Africa Task Force
Working together to stop illegal fishing



'Regional Cooperation to Stop Illegal Fishing: A Tale of Two Task Forces' has been written by Stop Illegal Fishing, in cooperation with Trygg Mat Tracking and the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea.

This report tells the story of the development and operations of two regional task forces and how they made a difference to stopping illegal fishing. The first, FISH-i Africa was set up in southern and eastern Africa focusing on the Western Indian Ocean and the second was set up in West Africa focusing on the Gulf of Guinea. The report details the why, where, who, how and what in respect to the task forces, it considers what they achieved and what the future holds for these unique examples of regional cooperation. It showcases what worked, lesson learning, and provides a comparative analysis of the two task forces, considering their differences and similarities, and highlighting how these differences shaped the two models. The report is intended for regional and international policy makers, funding organisations, national agencies and all those interested to understanding better how the regional task force approach can help to stop illegal fishing.

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REGIONAL COOPERATION TO STOP ILLEGAL FISHING

The establishment of regional monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) centres by the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) provides a strong foundation for pan-African cooperation in fighting illegal fishing.

Building on the success of the FISH-i Africa and West Africa Task Forces the regional centres will provide a focus for coordination, cooperation and collaboration in MCS activities.

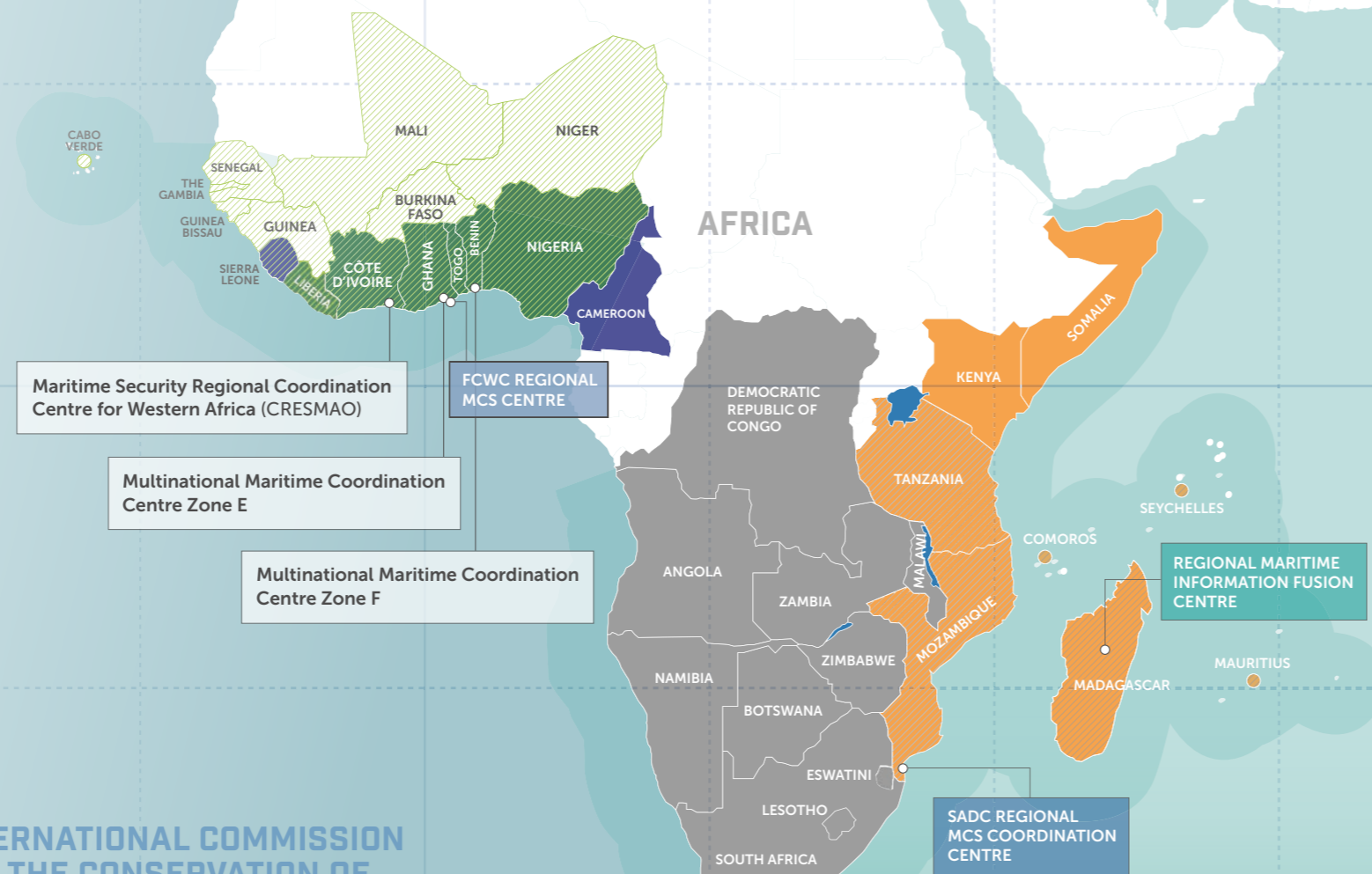
KEY ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:

- Sharing of intelligence and information between fisheries enforcement officers and other regional and global players.
- Building capacity through training, mentoring and the development of practical tools.
- Developing registers of fishing vessels through improved and coordinated checks before issuing licences and registration or allowing port entry.
- Coordination of investigations and action against illegal operators.
- Increasing oversight through monitoring vessel and fishing activity.

- FISH-i Africa Task Force
- Southern African Development Community (SADC) member states
- West Africa Task Force members
- West Africa Task Force observers
- Economic Community of West African States member states

INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF ATLANTIC TUNAS CONVENTION AREA

INDIAN OCEAN TUNA COMMISSION CONVENTION AREA



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ACRONYMS

AIS	Automatic identification system	MCSCC	Fisheries Monitoring Control and Surveillance Coordination Centre (of the SADC)
AU	African Union	NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
AUDA-NEPAD	African Union Development Agency	NFDS	Nordenfjeldske Development Services
AU-IBAR	The African Union Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources	NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
C188	Work in Fishing Convention	PESCAO	Programme for Improved Regional Fisheries Governance in Western Africa
CAMFA	Conference of African Ministers of Fisheries and Aquaculture	PRSP	Regional Plan for Fisheries Surveillance (of the IOC)
CRESMAO	Maritime Security Regional Coordination Centre for Western Africa	PSMA	Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate IUU Fishing
CTA	Cape Town Agreement	RFMO	Regional fisheries management organisation
DWFN	Distant water fishing nation	RMCSO	Regional Monitoring Control and Surveillance Centre (of the FCWC)
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States	RMIFC	Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (Madagascar)
EEZ	Exclusive economic zone	SADC	Southern African Development Community
EU	European Union	SDG	Sustainable development goal
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization	SIF	Stop Illegal Fishing
FCWC	Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea	SRFC	Sub Regional Fisheries Committee
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit	SWIOFC	Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission
ICCAT	International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas	TANZANIA	The United Republic of Tanzania
ILO	International Labor Organization	TMT	Trygg Mat Tracking
IMO	International Maritime Organization	TRAFFIC	The Wildlife Trade Monitoring Network
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization	UN	United Nations
INTREP	Intelligence report	USD	United States dollar
IOC	Indian Ocean Commission	VMS	Vessel monitoring system
IOTC	Indian Ocean Tuna Commission	WATF	West Africa Task Force
IPMU	Interim Project Management Unit	WIO	Western Indian Ocean
IUU	Illegal, unreported and unregulated (fishing)		
MATT	Multiagency task team		
MCS	Monitoring, control and surveillance		
MMCC	Multinational Maritime Coordination Centre		

TRIBUTE

The stories of the FISH-i Africa and West Africa Task Forces are built on the individual contributions of many. Intentionally, individuals are not singled out for acclaim: it has been our unity that has made us strong and driven our success.

However, we wish to pay tribute to two visionaries and leaders, whose exceptional contributions are engraved deeply within the fabric of the task forces. They inspired us, gave us confidence, and instilled faith in our ability.

Geoffrey Nanyaro and Gunnar Album



Geoffrey Nanyaro



Gunnar Album

Geoffrey had a fascinating life. He often entertained us with tales of his childhood as a young Maasai warrior, recalling how he would overcome the threat of a lion by staring directly into its eyes, he would smile wryly as he compared it to overcoming the ruthlessness of illegal fishing operators. Geoffrey served the fisheries industry over many years, particularly in public service as the National Director of Fisheries for the Republic of Tanzania and the Director General of the Tanzania Deep Sea Fishing Authority. Regardless of his position and authority, Geoffrey was humble, generous, principled, witty and clever. He was a true ambassador for African fisheries, serving with great honour and dedication as the inaugural Chairperson for Stop Illegal Fishing and for FISH-i Africa from 2012 until his death in April 2015.

Geoffrey was an inspirational man with great integrity – he was always prepared to stand up for fairness and justice, but above all he was a gentleman and a friend who remains fondly in our hearts.

Gunnar's death in 2014 was a tragic loss to the fisheries world. His genius and daring to challenge conventional norms led him to pioneer many areas in the fisheries investigation field. Based on work in Norwegian and international fisheries over decades, Gunnar co-founded Trygg Mat Tracking in 2013 to support governments and organisations to take enforcement action against illegal operators. Gunnar and the task forces were synergistic – providing an opportunity to link frontline African enforcement officers with intelligence derived from Gunnar's uncanny savvy for sniffing out illegality. The buzz of excitement and the long phone calls between Norway and Africa, the sharing of information about rogue vessels and dodgy operators and agents, the exchange of emails, photos, and tracking plots, all became the hallmarks of FISH-i investigations. It was Gunnar's brilliance, patience and humour that drove many investigations – his passing has left a big gap in many of our lives.

FOREWORD BY FISH-i AFRICA TASK FORCE



Elsa da Gloria Pátria

The importance of developing sustainable, fair, legal and equitable fisheries has never been greater for Africa. Our coastal states and small island developing states face enormous pressures from a combination of climate change, population growth, increasingly sophisticated fishing technology and vessels, and the economic and geopolitical forces at play that impact on who accesses our fisheries and who pays to protect them.

As we have stated in our commitments to the global sustainable development goals (SDGs) and our African Agenda 2063, we need our fisheries to feed our people. Our fisheries contribute to the livelihoods of many and provide food and nutrition security for even more. Illegal fishing is not a problem we can ignore, and it is not an easy problem to address. Since the drive to declare exclusive economic zones (EEZs) in the 1980s, African states have struggled to effectively protect these areas. Incursions by unlicensed vessels or from operators who play the system, changing names and flags to hide their identity and avoid oversight and sanctions, and using damaging fishing methods, all negatively impact on our resources and environment, creating damage that will last for generations to come.

The development of regional cooperation – first through FISH-i Africa and later through the West Africa Task Force – has brought real resolve and energy to the fight against illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. Interestingly, whilst the two task forces may look the same from the outside, they really are different and we hope that this report can clearly show both the similarities and differences, so that others may learn from these experiences.

This report is timely, it is published as the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC) launches their Regional Monitoring Control and Surveillance Centre (RMCS) and as FISH-i is integrated into the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Regional Fisheries Monitoring Control and Surveillance Coordination Centre (MCSCC). These transitions are a real endorsement of the task forces and a tribute to the systems and activities, and people who have made them happen.

We hope that you can share our sense of success in developing these cooperations and the significant steps made towards developing mechanisms that will, in time, stop illegal fishing.

Elsa da Gloria Pátria
Chairperson of Stop Illegal Fishing

WELCOME BY WEST AFRICA TASK FORCE



Seraphin Dedi Nadjé

When the FCWC was formed in 2007 we knew that tackling illegal fishing was a priority for our organisation. In West Africa it is estimated that between 40 to 60 per cent of fish caught in our region are caught illegally, these are amongst the highest levels of illegal fishing globally.

The challenge, of course, comes in tackling this: problems are entrenched, capacity is low and language and cultural barriers limit cooperation. We have seen that when countries act alone their impact is limited. We know there are no simple solutions and that regional bodies, technical expertise, and international agreements are all playing a part in addressing the issue. But success has been limited.

The FCWC, as a regional fisheries body (RFB), made important progress by adopting its first Regional Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate IUU fishing in 2009. There was strong political will in the countries of the region, and this led to the establishment of a regional working group on combatting IUU fishing in 2010.

Unfortunately, as a young organisation our resources and capacity were limited and this in turn limited the activities of the working group. The funding support provided by Norad in 2015 was very timely and allowed us to strengthen and develop the working group as it evolved into the West Africa Task Force (WATF), our regional mechanism to combat IUU fishing. Our experiences are shared throughout this publication and our success and challenges can be explored. We hope this provides useful insight to those considering the value of regional cooperation, or those exploring establishing a task force.

Over the past year and more, the global COVID-19 pandemic has required the WATF to adapt their national monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) regimes, and their ways of working regionally together. We have seen a rapid adaptation to a more digital world, one in which face to face meetings have moved online, the use of equipment such as body cameras to assist port controls are being considered and trialled, and the use of satellite monitoring tools has been regionally established through the RMCS.

At the centre of these efforts is ensuring that effective communications are maintained, and that MCS personnel can continue to do their crucial jobs in fisheries monitoring centres, at dockside, and at sea.

Seraphin Dedi Nadjé
Secretary General of the FCWC

WHY



WHY COOPERATE REGIONALLY TO STOP ILLEGAL FISHING?

It is not easy to develop cooperation. There are many practical and political barriers that range from competition over resources, conflicting agendas, corruption, lack of understanding or language barriers that make regional cooperation difficult. But there are also good reasons why regional cooperation is worth considering as an approach to stop illegal fishing, these include:

NATIONAL EFFORTS HAVE LIMITED IMPACT

IUU fishing is, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), a monumental problem. It affects the livelihoods of fishers, exacerbates poverty and contributes to food insecurity. In addition it robs the world's oceans of 26 million tonnes of seafood and causes over 23 billion USD of financial losses each year. IUU fishing comes in many forms but is essentially when fishers and fishing vessel operators do not comply with national, regional and international laws or regulations that govern the fishing industry. It has no respect for national borders and is often linked to transnational and organised crime. The problem of IUU fishing is simply too big and too complex for any one country to tackle on its own.

Regional cooperation helps to facilitate a systematic response across a whole region, this joint up approach results in no place for illegal operators to hide. By uniting forces, the destruction caused by IUU fishing can be reduced, offering an entire region a chance to prosper, to rebuild fish stocks and increase the social and economic benefits that healthy fisheries provide.

MAKE THE MOST OF LIMITED CAPACITY AND RESOURCES

Many developing coastal states have large EEZs but often limited resources for monitoring fishing activities within their waters. Within a region, countries are likely to have different levels of MCS ability, this creates a patchwork of human, institutional and physical capacity. This results in gaps in a region's protection against IUU fishing, so even if one country has strong MCS capacity, if gaps exist within the region, it effectively leaves a back door open to invite IUU operators in.

By uniting through regional centres of excellence, coordinated schemes for inspection, shared intelligence and information and the cooperative use of remote and physical inspection tools, robust protection for a region is developed. When resources are pooled together, they are strengthened, made more efficient and support wider and more comprehensive detection of illegal operators creating a real barrier and deterrence to IUU fishing.

STOP THE EXPLOITATION OF WEAK STATES AND INSTITUTIONS

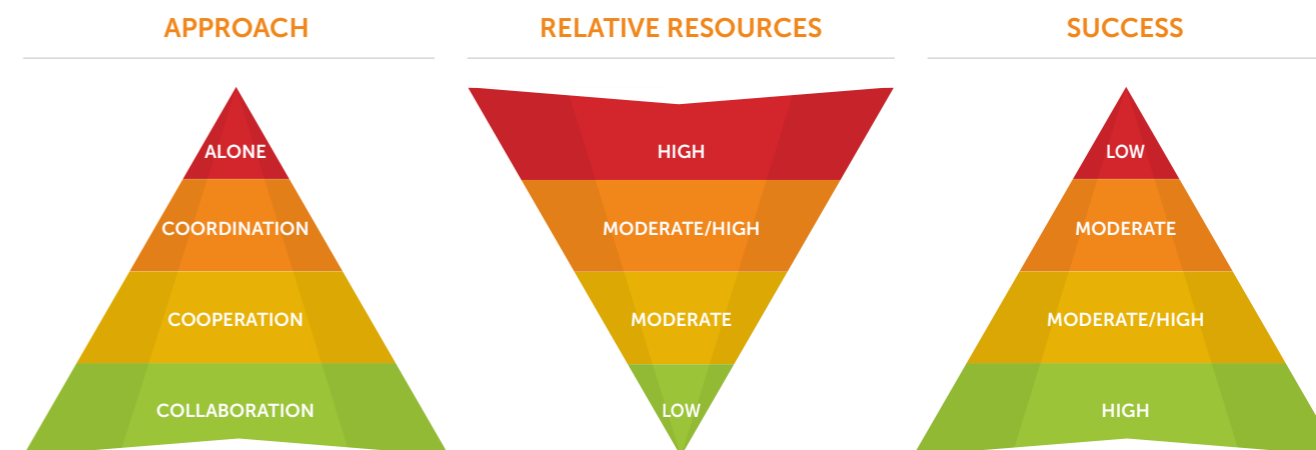
IUU fishers and operators target regions with weaker governance because these are the locations where their illegal activity can thrive. While limited capacity and lax controls are part of weaker governance, some operators target vulnerable countries to access corrupt networks of agents and officials. These networks are webs of dishonesty. Led by mafia-like kingpins they span whole regions and facilitate the illegal registration of vessels, access to fishery resources and entry into ports where illegally caught fish can be offloaded or transhipped undetected. Corruption also enables protection, buying a safe passage and a blind eye to illegality and the whitewashing of illegal product into the value chain.

A united region can use their combined force, knowledge, and intelligence – including institutional anchors and operational and political champions – to drive the campaign to stop corruption. By standing together and refusing to turn a blind eye, corruption is eroded. Regional cooperation helps to expose corrupt players, making it harder for them to operate, reducing their reach and their power.

PUT REGIONAL PRIORITIES FIRST

Distant water fishing nations (DWFNs) are some of the most economically and politically powerful countries in the world, while developing country regions own some of the most productive fisheries in the world. This combination has resulted in the management mechanisms within developing regions being dominated by the agendas of DWFN operators and their governments. Without regional cooperation the needs of coastal states will continue to be put behind the needs of other players and as resources dwindle so will benefits to the region.

Regional cooperation enables a region to put their priorities first. Existing governance mechanisms, such as regional fisheries management organisations (RFMOs), will need to adjust to accommodate a united regional voice. This will involve paving the way for balanced and viable blue growth that contributes in a meaningful manner to achieving regional agendas and SDG targets.



THE GOAL OF REGIONAL COOPERATION

Each participating country gains greater benefits by working together with other countries within a geo-political or fisheries related region, than through working alone. There are steps or stages in working together, these include: acting alone, coordination, cooperation, and collaboration.

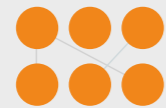
Developing full collaboration to stop illegal fishing is not a linear process, it will involve learning curves and successes and failures along the way. The overarching aim is for the shared vision or goal to be the priority, the centre of the collaboration, shaping and influencing all activities within the collaboration. Through this, each country will benefit more, and the overall sum of the benefits will be greater, than if countries acted alone.

ACTING ALONE



- No regional activity – only internal interagency cooperation.
- No shared sense of identity.
- Competitive.

COORDINATING



- Occasional activity – as resources allow or in response to events.
- Supports ad hoc group efforts.

COOPERATING



- Supports group and individual ventures.
- Systematic and ongoing – planned through task force.

COLLABORATING



- Joint approach – embedded in policy and legal framework to support MCS and development of minimum terms and conditions.
- Priority to group, for greater good.
- Joint identity.
- Shared goals.



THE BENEFITS OF REGIONAL COLLABORATION



These can be demonstrated through an analysis of regional cooperation on four areas: the impact potential on IUU fishing, the resource efficiency, the closing of corruption gaps and the contribution to regional priorities.

The MCS activities compared, are all key tasks that the MCS officials in task forces perform in their home countries, while the table demonstrates the different impact levels at different levels of cooperation between the task force countries:



MCS activities



Comments



Impact potential on IUU fishing



Resource efficiency



Closing corruption gaps



Addressing regional priorities

ACTING ALONE					
Licensing requirements	No opportunity to cross-check accuracy of information submitted.	●	●	●	●
Due diligence checks	No opportunity to validate documents or vessel identification.	●	●	●	●
Remote tracking	No ability to share VMS tracks or validate tracks with sightings or inspections.	●	●	●	●
Denial of port use	Limited information to support denial of use. Vessel is likely to move to another port in the region.	●	●	●	●
Information sharing	Only internally, between agencies.	●	●	●	●
At sea patrol	Within EEZ (limited range of patrols) but no shared information to target patrol area.	●	●	●	●
Enforcement action	National enforcement action only.	●	●	●	●

● HIGH ● MODERATE ● LOW



MCS activities



Comments



Impact potential on IUU fishing



Resource efficiency



Closing corruption gaps



Addressing regional priorities

COORDINATING

Licensing requirements	Ability to spot check some information.	●	●	●	●
Due diligence checks	Ability to validate specific documents or check occasional vessel identity.	●	●	●	●
Remote tracking	Ability to request VMS tracks when required.	●	●	●	●
Denial of port use	Alerts for denial of port use to be shared in the region. Individual countries to decide on action.	●	●	●	●
Information sharing	Limited ad hoc information sharing when one country considers it necessary.	●	●	●	●
At sea patrol	Coordination of patrols where possible, especially between neighbouring countries.	●	●	●	●
Enforcement action	National enforcement action may be supported by information from other countries.	●	●	●	●

COOPERATING

Licensing requirements	Systematic cross-checking of information accuracy as required.	●	●	●	●
Due diligence checks	Systematic validation of documents as required. Systems in place to validate vessel identify (photos etc.)	●	●	●	●
Remote tracking	Systematic sharing of VMS tracks and some centralised support tracking.	●	●	●	●
Denial of port use	Denial of port use likely to be supported across the region.	●	●	●	●
Information sharing	Systematic access to information as required.	●	●	●	●
At sea patrol	Coordination of patrols within region where possible.	●	●	●	●
Enforcement action	National enforcement action supported by assistance and collaboration from neighbouring enforcement officials.	●	●	●	●

● HIGH ● MODERATE ● LOW



MCS activities



Comments



Impact potential on IUU fishing



Resource efficiency



Closing corruption gaps



Addressing regional priorities

COLLABORATING

Licensing requirements	Regional licensing system, supported by centralised licence record or register.	●	●	●	●
Due diligence checks	Regional system for collaborative checks, centrally coordinated.	●	●	●	●
Remote tracking	Regional system for VMS with central tracking capability.	●	●	●	●
Denial of port use	Agreed denial across region if vessel's links to IUU fishing sufficiently proven.	●	●	●	●
Information sharing	Highly systematic and centrally coordinated.	●	●	●	●
At sea patrol	Centrally coordinated and supported patrols targeting IUU hot spots.	●	●	●	●
Enforcement action	National enforcement action, supported by collaborative action in other countries. Supported by regional commitments and legal frameworks.	●	●	●	●

● HIGH ● MODERATE ● LOW



REGIONAL COOPERATION TO STOP ILLEGAL FISHING: A TALE OF TWO TASK FORCES

WHY CHOOSE A TASK FORCE?

If regional cooperation is considered a worthwhile approach, deciding which type of cooperation will be most suitable is the next step. Experiences from the FISH-i and WATF show that regional task forces can be a useful approach to tackle IUU fishing, but what they do, who is involved, and how they operate will differ across regions with no one size fitting all.

These examples, as explored in this report, show how the task forces started at different stages of regional cooperation, had different priorities, and resulted in different outcomes and indicators of success. However, from these experiences, it can also be identified that both task forces started out with the following in place:

A SHARED TASK

Stopping IUU fishing is a complex task, and a regional task force is unlikely to focus on all aspects needed to achieve this. However, for a task force to be successful it needs to address a common problem through a common solution. Regional cooperation needs to be addressed in a flexible manner, to amplify efforts, and build awareness. The task identified should link to what is happening and what can realistically be done. Untargeted actions are a waste of time and can bring negative results. Usually, the task at hand will involve, common vessels, players, companies, fish stocks and a need to see the bigger picture and the regional patterns to find a viable solution.

RESOURCES TO OPERATE

Although a low cost option, task forces need resources to operate and to have a good chance of success. The facilitating environment for a task force requires adequate human, institutional and infrastructure resources. This includes the political will to support the creation and work of the task force, the right people to lead and guide the process and an interest and enthusiasm from those that will form the task force. Adequate resources are needed to enable all the aspects of running a task force.

A CONCEPT FOR CHANGE

A task force can be a good approach to test a concept for change and to create that change. A regional task force has more flexibility to adapt than a formal inter-governmental mechanism and for that reason is often instigated to test a proof of concept in respect to stopping IUU fishing ahead of higher cost solutions such as regional vessel monitoring systems (VMS), joint patrols, or a regional MCS centre. A regional task force can also involve a smaller group of countries to test the usefulness of a concept before committing to building a broader or more permanent cooperation. Task forces offer an opportunity to reflect on success and failures and to learn lessons from both, ensuring that effort is not duplicated, demonstrating the need for, and value, of ongoing and systematic cooperation.

If there is a need for regional cooperation to stop illegal fishing, and these three elements exist – a shared task, the resources needed for it to happen and a concept to achieve it – then the opportunity is available and the time may be right to form a regional task force to stop illegal fishing.



WHY WAS THE FISH-i AFRICA TASK FORCE ESTABLISHED?

The waters of the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) have rich marine resources that attract over 500 commercial fishing vessels from around the world, mainly to catch offshore tuna and coastal species, such as shrimp and finfish, destined for consumption in Europe, Asia, or the USA.

The coastal states of the region are mainly least developed countries with some small island developing states, all have enormous social and economic development needs.

While all the coastal states sell licences to foreign fishing vessels to fish in their EEZs, few see these vessels using their ports, apart from the countries that have developed onshore canning operations for tuna or those who license foreign trawlers. Small-scale and semi-industrial fishing that provides fish and seafood for local consumption is common in the region but none of the countries have home-grown industrial fishing capacity. A few, most significantly the Seychelles, have flagged foreign operated vessels resulting in increased flag state MCS responsibilities but limited other benefits.

In the early 2000s working towards sustainable management of fisheries, as reflected in the 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, was the key concern of fisheries authorities. Increased social and economic benefits were the hoped-for impact of good management, rather than the expected result. This approach was reflected in the 2001, SADC Protocol on Fisheries, providing the regional backdrop to sustainable management of fisheries. At this point, IUU fishing was identified as a major challenge to management, although the dynamics and detail were not well understood.

In response, in 2001, regional MCS coordination and capacity building efforts were strengthened through the SADC regional marine fisheries MCS project funded by the European Union (EU). However, in 2007 the EU moved their funding to the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) to support the regional plan for fisheries surveillance in the offshore waters of the WIO, which aligned more to EU areas of fishing interest. At this point, the UK government began support for the SADC's MCS efforts including support in partnership with the South West Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC) to convene the first meeting of the Southern and Eastern African forum to counter IUU fishing in 2007. This era laid a solid foundation of coordination and capacity building across southern and eastern Africa. It also spurred political commitment towards long-term cooperation, which was embodied in the SADC Statement of Commitment to combat IUU fishing, initially signed by Ministers responsible for marine fisheries and later endorsed by SADC Heads of State in 2008.



Following the significant fanfare around the Statement of Commitment many seasoned MCS officials became frustrated. They were ready to step up and commit to cooperation and joint actions against illegal operators but there was no ability to operationalise the Statement of Commitment as it is hinged on a regional MCS centre. The words of a previous Minister of Fisheries, sums up this frustration '...at that point, our actions were not as strong as our words. Our efforts were fragmented, and we rarely shared what we knew or asked questions about what we wanted and needed to know. Without a united platform to fight illegal fishing, our individual efforts were at best ineffective with no, or very sparse results.'

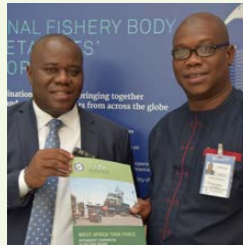
While work was diligently ongoing to establish the framework for the new regional MCS centre, a process that would take over ten years, in synergy, work was underway to create a bridging mechanism. The need to maintain regional momentum coupled with the desire to turn words into action were the key catalysts for the formation of the FISH-i Africa Task Force.

With the task identified, resources were needed to make it happen and an important meeting took place in 2009 that opened the door for the future funding of FISH-i. The Second Southern and Eastern African forum to counter IUU fishing, hosted again by Mozambique and funded by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), Stop Illegal Fishing (SIF), SWIOFC and for the first time also by The Pew Charitable Trusts. Pew indicated an interest to support the testing of the proof of concept that regional cooperation would spur enforcement action in the WIO, a concept that sat well with their interest to strengthen INTERPOL's capacity to fight transnational organised crime within the fisheries sector.

At the same meeting and over the next few years, the bonds between MCS officials and experts grew, some based on well established relationships and others newly developed. This diverse mix of people, with a shared vision and a commitment to the fisheries of the region, provided the final and essential ingredient to take the next step to launch a pilot project to test the concept of the FISH-i Africa Task Force in late 2012.



WHY WAS THE WEST AFRICA TASK FORCE ESTABLISHED?



The FCWC Secretary General had participated in the Partnership for Africa's Fisheries (PAF) Africa-wide IUU Working Group led by Stop Illegal Fishing, developed under the African Union development arm, NEPAD from 2009-2012.

The working group was convened to identify solutions to the major challenges in tackling IUU. It acknowledged regional cooperation as a strategic component of any attempts to address the issue and the potential to build cooperative mechanisms into existing regional organisations was promoted as a priority.

The FCWC identified the opportunity to develop their existing IUU working group into an MCS task force and started working with potential partners to prepare a scoping study. The study noted that a coastal upwelling brings rich fishery resources to the FCWC region, contributing to local and global nutritional needs, employment, and income for governments through fees collected for licences and fisheries access agreements.

Fisheries are exploited by local artisanal and semi-industrial vessels, and industrial locally flagged vessels that are generally foreign operated, and industrial foreign flagged vessels. The region is also an important trade hub with major ports being used for the import and export of fish and seafood and for processing tuna. As with southern and eastern Africa, this region was a recognised hot spot for illegal fishing.

The FCWC was a relatively young regional fisheries body, established in 2007 with a mission to ensure the sustainable development of the fisheries resources of the region. Of importance for stopping illegal fishing, was a 2009 Declaration (the Accra Declaration) signed by FCWC ministers on combatting IUU fishing and calling for effective monitoring and surveillance of fishing activities. The Declaration also committed the countries to adhere to the FAO International Plan of Action on IUU Fishing through the adoption of the FCWC Regional Plan of Action against IUU Fishing in 2009. In addition, links to FISH-i Africa had already been developed through the shared experiences with an illegal operator and fishing vessel called PREMIER, which had demonstrated the strategic benefit that sharing intelligence across Africa had to offer in the fight against IUU fishing, and the willingness of the FCWC Secretariat and region to cooperate and share information.

The commitment of the FCWC ministers, was amplified through a further Declaration (the Banjul Declaration) made by ministers from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), at the African Union (AU) 2010 Conference of African Ministers of Fisheries and Aquaculture (CAMFA). This Declaration expressed the ministers' determination to prevent, halt and eliminate IUU fishing. These commitments demonstrated the strong political will to unite against IUU fishing, but evidence showed that the challenges faced in the region due to limited human capacity and resources for MCS were providing a great hinderance to the realisation of these commitments. Another constraint highlighted by many in the region was the limited operational level coordination between the MCS officials of the different FCWC countries.

The WATF concept for a regional task force embedded within FCWC and supported through funding provided by the Norwegian Government was presented in December 2014 to the FCWC ministers in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. The focus of the task force was to operationalise Conventions the member states had signed on key issues including information sharing and harmonised terms and conditions for access to resources, and formally establish the activities of a MCS working group as the task force. Therefore, the objectives were to develop coordination and to strengthen regional mechanisms and national capacity to achieve long-term regional MCS cooperation, with the goal that this increased capacity and cooperation would result in enforcement actions.





WHO

WHO IS INVOLVED?



The people involved in the task forces and the role they play has followed a similar model for each task force. The core task force members include the country participants, a coordination team and a technical team – these people form the task force. They are complimented by supporting members drawn from regional partners and experts, observers and funders who may or may not attend task force meetings but will interact with the task force directly or via the coordination team.

MEMBER STATES

- Provide a national focal point for communication.
- Participate in task force meetings.
- Identify regional MCS and technical support priorities.
- Share information routinely on e.g. licensed vessels.
- Participate on the online communications platform.
- Ask and respond to queries and requests.
- Share alerts on high-risk vessels or illegal activity.
- Participate in training and research activities.
- Present the task force and its work at regional and international meetings.

COORDINATION TEAM

- Support, organise and promote the task force.
- Manage financial resources, audits, and project monitoring and evaluation processes.
- Organise and facilitate meetings and activities of the task force.
- Coordinate the acquisition and use of funds.
- Allocate and monitor progress on tasks requested by the task force.
- Coordinate the technical team.
- Coordinate with regional, African and international initiatives.
- Chair the task force.
- Prepare the record of task force meetings.
- Facilitate communications and communication material.
- Maintain the online and social media presence.

TECHNICAL TEAM

- Provide intelligence, analytical, legal, operational and communications support.
- Prepare tools for national fisheries authorities as required by the task force.
- Conduct research and analysis.
- Prepare material and research for publication and presentations.
- Assist with capacity building and development of tools and resources.
- Monitor vessel activity and provide access to specialist databases and information sources.
- Assist with investigations and cases as required.
- Present the task force and its work at regional and international meetings.

REGIONAL PARTNERS AND EXPERTS

- Participate in task force meetings.
- Cooperate on capacity building and information sharing.
- Coordinate to avoid duplication of activities.
- Share best practice.
- Amplify the regional experience and feed into a regional voice on fisheries issues.
- Cooperate on cases and investigations.

OBSERVERS

- Participate in task force meetings.
- Cooperate on capacity building and information sharing.
- Coordinate to avoid duplication of activities.
- Share best practice.
- Cooperate on cases and investigations.
- Neighbouring countries that are not able to join, or do not want to become permanent members can participate and engage in this way.

FUNDING PARTNERS

- Provide financial support to the activities of the task force.
- Provide in-kind support or expertise.

FISH-i AFRICA



THE FISH-i AFRICA COORDINATION AND TECHNICAL TEAMS

Following the signing of the SADC Statement of Commitment in 2008, SIF worked with the SADC Secretariat, the SWIOFC Secretariat and other regional players to support implementation of the commitments and increase regional MCS cooperation. Part of this involved SIF forming the FISH-i coordination team. To do this SIF joined forces with NFDS and Trygg Mat Tracking (TMT) and later the FISH-i chairperson. Each member had a special role in the team which related to their expertise, access to resources and background within the region.



STOP ILLEGAL FISHING

ABOUT	SIF is an independent, African based not for profit organisation committed to ending the devastating impacts of illegal fishing across all African fisheries. SIF is a member driven network that grew from within the southern and eastern African region, making it a natural choice to support the task force.
COORDINATION TEAM ACTIVITIES	Organise and facilitate meetings and activities of the task force. Prepare the record of task force meetings. Support, organise and promote the task force. Coordinate with regional, African and international initiatives. Allocate and monitor progress on tasks requested by the task force. Facilitate communications and communication material. Maintain the online and social media presence.
TECHNICAL TEAM ACTIVITIES	Provide intelligence, analytical, legal, operational and communications support. Prepare tools for national fisheries authorities. Conduct research and analysis. Prepare material and research for publication and presentations. Assist with capacity building and development of tools and resources. Assist with investigations and cases as required. Present the task force and its work at regional and international meetings.
RESOURCES	The Waterloo Foundation funding. Pew funding via NFDS.

NFDS

ABOUT	NFDS is a consultancy group providing services focusing on fisheries development, built on over forty years working in Africa. They have offices in Botswana (NFDS Africa), Norway (Nordenfjeldske Development Services (NFDS)) and satellite offices around Africa. NFDS is well connected, has technical, research and financial expertise, and was well known to Pew, making them suitable to manage the financial and administrative aspects of FISH-i.
COORDINATION TEAM ACTIVITIES	Manage financial resources, audits, and project monitoring and evaluation processes. Coordinate the acquisition and use of funds. Coordinate the technical team. Support, organise and promote the task force.
TECHNICAL TEAM ACTIVITIES	Provide intelligence, analytical, legal, operational and communications support. Prepare tools for national fisheries authorities. Conduct research and analysis. Assist with capacity building and development of tools and resources.
RESOURCES	The Pew Charitable Trusts funding.

TRYGG MAT TRACKING

ABOUT	TMT is a Norwegian not for profit organisation focusing on fisheries intelligence, analysis and capacity building to assist fisheries enforcement efforts, primarily in African coastal states. At the start of FISH-i, TMT was new to the region, but due to their cooperation with SIF, NFDS and Pew, their technical expertise and the development of a TMT fishing vessel and operator database (FACT), and the provision of INTREPs, they became an important partner for FISH-i.
COORDINATION TEAM ACTIVITIES	Support and promote the task force.
TECHNICAL TEAM ACTIVITIES	Provide intelligence, analytical and operational support. Prepare tools for national fisheries authorities. Conduct analysis. Assist with capacity building and development of tools and resources. Monitor vessel activity and provide access to specialist databases and information sources. Assist with investigations and cases as required. Present the task force and its work at regional and international meetings.
RESOURCES	Pew funding via NFDS. In-kind services and access to FACT based on funding from additional sources.

FISH-i CHAIRPERSON

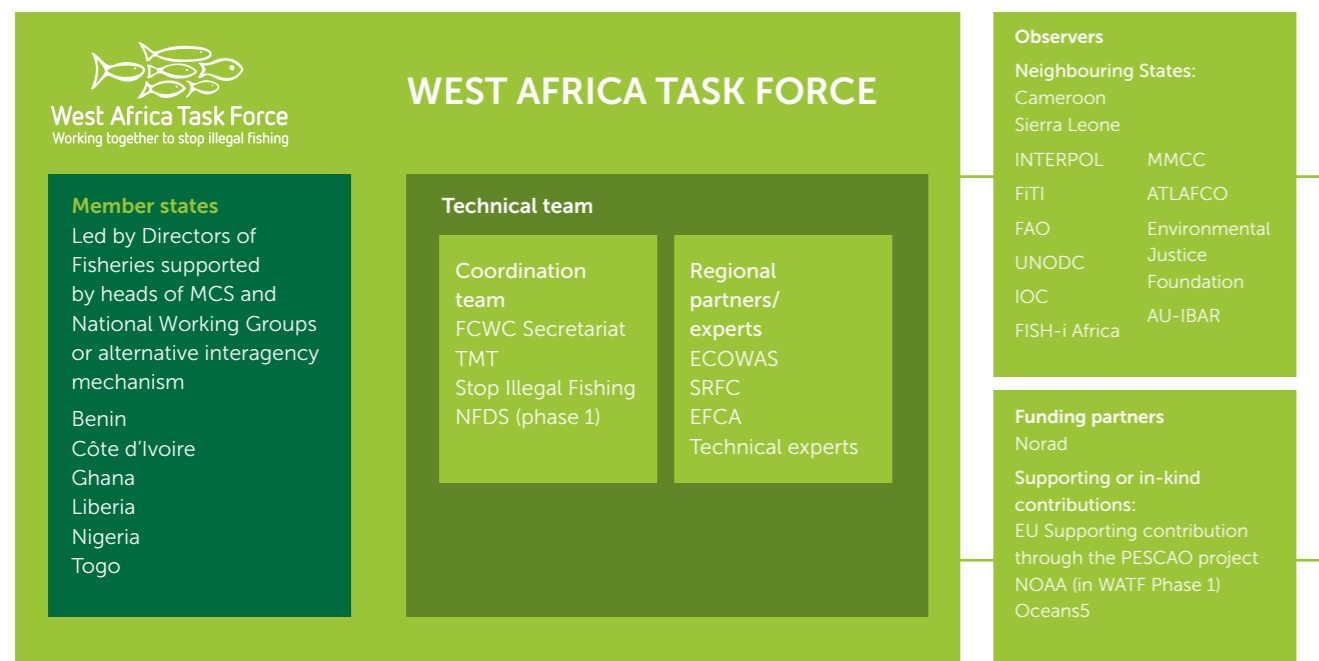
ABOUT	FISH-i initially was led by the Chairperson of SIF, but later, once their terms of reference were developed the members elected a chair.
COORDINATION TEAM ACTIVITIES	Chair the task force. Support and promote the task force.
TECHNICAL TEAM ACTIVITIES	Present the task force and its work at regional and international meetings.
RESOURCES	Support from Pew funding via NFDS as required.

REGIONAL PARTNERS

PARTNER	Role and activities with the technical team
SADC SECRETARIAT	Provide institutional framework and policy objectives. Coordination with regional initiatives and MCS architecture.
IOTC SECRETARIAT	Provide support as and when needed by IOTC member states. Coordination of activities. Information exchange as requested by IOTC member states. Responding to requests on e.g., vessel authorisation and identity.
SWIOFC CHAIRPERSON	Coordination of activities. Information sharing.
IOC SECRETARIAT/ SMARTFISH	Coordination of activities. Information sharing. Support/dovetailing meetings to reduce costs.
TRAFFIC	Provide expertise and support. Prepare trade related tools for national fisheries authorities.
TECHNICAL EXPERTS	Provide expertise and support. Conduct research and analysis. Assist with capacity building and development of tools and resources.



WEST AFRICA TASK FORCE



THE WEST AFRICA TASK FORCE COORDINATION TEAM

Following the success of FISH-i, and a scoping of the west Africa region by the FISH-i coordination team, a proposal to support the WATF was presented to Norad. This included a coordination team based on those involved in FISH-i with the addition of the regional fisheries body FCWC, where the task force would be anchored.



FCWC SECRETARIAT

ABOUT	FCWC was established in 2007 with a Secretariat in Ghana. FCWC is the regional organisation facilitating cooperation in fisheries management between the six member countries of the West Central Gulf of Guinea. The FCWC, although a relatively new organisation, had made strong progress in developing the institutional processes for cooperation and was ready to operationalise MCS cooperation, making them the ideal partners to launch a West Africa task force.
COORDINATION TEAM ACTIVITIES	Support, organise and promote the task force. Organise and facilitate meetings and activities of the task force. Facilitate communications and communication material. Maintain the online and social media presence. Institutional framework and policy objectives. Coordinate with regional, African and international initiatives.
TECHNICAL TEAM ACTIVITIES	Provide operational and communications support. Assist with capacity building and development of tools and resources. Assist with investigations and cases as required. Present the task force and its work at regional and international meetings.
RESOURCES	Norad funding through a sub-grant with TMT. Indirectly supported by NOAA funding for FCWC to be a key information hub on fisheries in West Africa. Indirectly supported through member state contributions to the FCWC Secretariat.

TRYGG MAT TRACKING

ABOUT	TMT is a Norwegian not for profit organisation focusing on fisheries intelligence, analysis and capacity building to support fisheries enforcement efforts, primarily in African coastal states. Although the organisation had been recently founded at the start of the WATF, TMT staff had extensive experience in the region. TMT was identified by Norad as a suitable partner for the financial and administrative aspects of the task force.
COORDINATION TEAM ACTIVITIES	Support and promote the task force. Manage financial resources, audits, and project monitoring and evaluation processes. Organise and facilitate meetings and activities of the task force. Coordinate the acquisition and use of funds. Allocate and monitor progress on tasks requested by the task force. Coordinate the technical team. Coordination with regional and international initiatives.
TECHNICAL TEAM ACTIVITIES	Provide intelligence, analytical and operational support. Prepare tools for national fisheries authorities. Conduct research and analysis. Assist with capacity building and development of tools and resources. Monitor vessel activity and provide access to specialist databases and information sources. Assist with investigations and cases as required. Present the task force and its work at regional and international meetings.
RESOURCES	Norad grant for WATF is provided to TMT. In-kind services and access to intelligence sources based on funding from additional sources. Oceans5 funding for capacity training.

STOP ILLEGAL FISHING

ABOUT	SIF is an independent, African based not for profit organisation with members drawn from across Africa and the world. SIF has operated in west Africa since its formation and brought useful experience from FISH-i to the WATF.
COORDINATION TEAM ACTIVITIES	Support and promote the task force. Manage financial sub-grant resources. Prepare the record of task force meetings.
TECHNICAL TEAM ACTIVITIES	Provide analytical, legal, operational and communications support. Prepare tools for national fisheries authorities. Conduct research and analysis. Prepare material and research for publication and presentations. Facilitate communications and communication materials Assist with capacity building and development of tools and resources. Assist with investigations and cases as required. Present the task force and its work at regional and international meetings. Coordinate with African and international initiatives.
RESOURCES	Norad funded through a sub-grant with TMT. Indirectly through funds from PSM-SIF Project. Indirectly through FISH-i cross benefits.

NFDS

ABOUT	NFDS is a consultancy group providing services focusing on fisheries development, built on over forty years working in Africa and with strong Norwegian roots, having worked with Norad since 1984. NFDS had experience in coordination and technical support to FISH-i.
COORDINATION TEAM ACTIVITIES	Support and promote the task force. Manage financial sub-grant resources.
TECHNICAL TEAM ACTIVITIES	Provide analytical, legal and operational support. Conduct research and analysis. Coordinate with international initiatives. Assist with capacity building and development of tools and resources. Assist with investigations and cases as required.
RESOURCES	Norad funded through a sub-grant with TMT only for phase one of the project.

REGIONAL PARTNERS

PARTNER	Role and activities with the technical team
ECOWAS	Provide regional framework and policy objectives. Coordinate with regional and African initiatives.
SRFC	Information exchange. Sharing of intelligence.
EFCA	Training and capacity building. Expert support.
TECHNICAL EXPERTS	Provide expertise and support. Conduct research and analysis. Assist with capacity building and development of tools and resources.





HOW

ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE

Once the why, where and who have been determined, the next step is to start establishing the task force. This may happen relatively quickly or require more time, with some elements continuing to evolve once the task force is underway. This was certainly the case for both FISH-i and WATF.

The four main elements that need consideration and focus in establishing a task force are: the scope, the procedures, the relationships, and the identity of the task force.



SCOPE	
AIM	Decide on the specific regional or institutional needs that are priorities, supporting the overarching ambition to fight IUU fishing.
HOW	Review the regional situation, identifying gaps in policy and legal frameworks, capacity, and resources. Consider whether the task force should focus on fisheries alone, or whether additional agencies are required to address fisheries crimes. Develop synergy and avoid overlap with other projects or initiatives.
FISH-i	Based on strong fisheries cooperation with interagency cooperation promoted and utilised when possible. Focused on the WIO, with limited countries for the pilot phase, and the ambition to expand as resources permitted. Synergy with the IOC activities which were focussed on joint at-sea patrols and the development of a regional VMS.
WATF	Based on the FCWC region and aimed to support implementation of FCWC framework and instruments. Focus on capacity development and coordination between countries and within countries for interagency coordination.



PROCEDURES	
AIM	Agree by consensus on how the task force will operate to achieve its aims and to fit the needs of the members.
HOW	Decide on what roles are needed and how they are assigned, e.g., the need for a chairperson and country focal person. Discussion on the level of formality of the task force and what procedures need to be formalised. Consider whether a Terms of Reference is needed, and if so, develop through discussion with the task force. Consider the need and benefit of memorandums of understanding between different players in the task force. Have clear agreement on what information is confidential and what can be shared.
FISH-i	Initial focus on 'getting on with it'. Initially the Stop Illegal Fishing chairperson also fulfilled the task force chairperson role, later a dedicated task force chairperson was chosen by the members. The development of an agreed terms of reference only came later when issues of admitting new members and changes in senior officials and ministers necessitated a more formal approach. Many task force members strongly advocated for maintaining an informal approach, as this allows more action without the downside of bureaucracy and official processes. Agreement to maintain task force information confidential within the task force and approval was required if this should be shared externally.
WATF	Formed under the FCWC conventions on minimum requirements for fisheries access (2013) and pooling and sharing of information and data (2014) which were already in place. Semi-formal procedures for running meetings implemented as these followed the norm for FCWC. A rotating member state chair for FCWC also acted as the chairperson for the task force meetings. Concerns over confidentiality were discussed regularly in early task force meetings leading to an FCWC additional protocol for the protection of shared information, which provides guidelines for information sharing between member states and technical partners, and was approved by FCWC ministers in 2017.



Have clear agreement on what information is confidential and what can be shared.



RELATIONSHIPS

AIM Develop productive, functional working relationships built on respect and trust.

HOW Get the right people together and connected so they know who to contact and can easily get in touch.

Provide opportunity for people to get to know each other through face to face and online engagement.

Provide translation and interpretation so that language does not become a barrier.

Provide positive role models and celebrate success.

Empower, motivate, and build trust.

Moderate and facilitate dialogue to maintain momentum and iron out misunderstandings.

Provide space for task force members to share their hopes, concerns, and feelings about the task force process.

Adopt a respectful and considered approach, showing understanding for national situations.

Establish a culture of openness and acceptance and an ethos of working in partnership.

FISH-i In initial task force meetings, some country participants and technical team members had long standing relationships through regional mechanisms and projects, providing a valuable foundation of trust and comradery.

Less familiar and often younger MCS personnel were welcomed into the group.

Stop Illegal Fishing personnel who facilitated meetings were well known to many task force members, helping to create a culture of openness and partnership.

While language challenges existed, English/French interpretation assisted the flow and exchange of information and Portuguese speakers made a great effort to communicate, the efforts made to understand each other nurtured a bond within the task force.

Differences and tensions between the concerns and interests of African mainland and African island members required respect and consideration to grow understanding and appreciation of the national perspectives and to de-personalise issues.

Social activities at task force meetings fostered friendships and fun into the work mix.

Including photos of task force members in the records of meetings and maintaining a list of who-was-who with contact details helped with maintaining contacts.

WATF FCWC fisheries directors generally knew each other, and this provided the basis for agreeing to work more closely. However, this was not true of the MCS officials who had not previously had the opportunity or forum to meet and interact.

Interpretation was important and used at all meetings to help communications.

Technical team members were known in some countries at the start of the task force, but as coordination in the region was generally at an initial stage it took time to develop understanding and trust between the different players.

Regular task force meetings helped to develop the relationships that became key to the work of the task force.

Appreciation of the differences between the fisheries sectors and MCS capacities in each country required respect and understanding.

Regular follow up, communications, country visits and regional trainings by the technical team contributed towards maintaining momentum of the regional mechanism.

Fostering national interagency relationships created understanding and appreciation of differing roles and responsibilities.



IDENTITY

AIM Create a coherent identity to develop loyalty, understanding and enable easy sharing of experiences.

HOW Agree on a name for the task force.

Develop a visual brand identity and graphic assets for e.g., logo, PowerPoint templates, banners etc.

Create an online presence either through the host institution website or by developing a dedicated website and social media channels.

FISH-i Very early on the name and logo for FISH-i, often called Fish-Eye, was developed along with the distinctive orange colour that identified much of FISH-i's work.

A standalone website was launched in the second year of the task force, to showcase success and share evidence of illegal fishing.

The Stop Illegal Fishing website was also used to promote the work of the task force and regular press releases were prepared with national authorities to demonstrate their work.

Early on the task force made presentations at international meetings, particularly to showcase the investigations and outcomes of the work.

WATF Initially the task force was anticipated to grow to include non-FCWC countries, so a wider based identity was developed.

The logo represents the six FCWC member States and highlights the strength of unity.

Online presence was developed within the FCWC website and social media channels and was supported by coordination team partners.

TMT and Stop Illegal Fishing websites used to promote the work of the task force.



RUNNING A TASK FORCE

The second aspect is how to run a task force. For this to happen three key elements are required – physical meetings, a mechanism for communication and technical expertise – to support the operations of a task force. This section provides generic detail on each, and a comparative look at the different activity, processes, and successes within each of the task forces.



TASK FORCE MEETINGS

COST: **HIGH**
 CAPACITY REQUIRED: **MODERATE**
 EFFECTIVENESS: **SIGNIFICANT**

Regular face-to face meetings to bring together representatives from task force countries, with the technical team and others, including invited observers and experts.



HOW	<p>Aim to hold twice a year – this interval allows for continuity of engagement.</p> <p>Locate, where practical, on a rotational basis in the members’ countries.</p> <p>To be attended by at least two representatives from each member country, including the focal person.</p> <p>Develop an agenda to include a closed session for sensitive or confidential discussions and, where agreed/needed, an open session to allow for participation of non-task force members, while maintaining a closed session.</p> <p>Provide simultaneous interpretation.</p> <p>Decisions of the task force and requests for support from the technical or coordination teams are agreed by the task force and included in a record of the meeting.</p> <p>Prepare a record of each meeting and circulate a draft for input before finalising.</p>
WHAT	<p>Updates on national situation by task force members, initiatives, developments, legal or personnel changes etc.</p> <p>Presentation and discussion of ongoing or developing cases and investigations.</p> <p>Technical discussions, usually on themes, work areas or research being undertaken.</p> <p>Agreement of action points.</p> <p>Where possible a field trip is included e.g. port visits to improve understanding of the national context and challenges.</p>
CHALLENGES	<p>Time burden of participation on MCS departments.</p> <p>High cost of convening a meeting – need funding support to enable meetings, per diems, expert support. This used a significant proportion of the overall task force budget.</p> <p>Continuity of MCS staff is important. New or inexperienced members can undermine the value of the process. If they are introduced, they should be accompanied by an experienced task force member.</p>
BENEFITS	<p>Builds relationships between national counterparts.</p> <p>Creates direct contact points between agencies and countries within the region.</p> <p>Opportunity to connect with international experts.</p> <p>Good opportunity to engage national politicians. Minister of the host country is invited to open or close the meeting and give a keynote speech.</p> <p>Creates shared purpose and actions.</p> <p>Provides a safe space for discussion, enabling genuine sharing of experience and information. Vital for building trust and communication.</p> <p>Opportunity to discuss and reflect and to take a regional perspective, which can highlight patterns of behaviour and illegalities.</p> <p>Provides task force driven direction for workplans including technical team activity.</p> <p>Develops accountability and follow up on issues and cases.</p>



FISH-i AFRICA

● HIGH ● MODERATE ● LOW

PRIORITY: ● ● ●

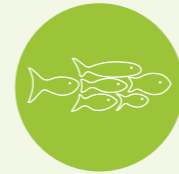
OPPORTUNITY: ● ● ●

EFFECTIVENESS: ● ● ●

ACTIVITY	An inception meeting took place ahead of the official establishment of FISH-i, helping to develop the momentum and willingness to cooperate. FISH-i has since then held eight task force meetings. Regularity, levels of participation and venues were determined by varying levels of funding through the FISH-i life cycle.
PROCESS	Format, discussion and needs were guided by task force members and focus was on active cases and how to progress enforcement action. Decisions and outcomes of the task force were agreed in the meeting. Simultaneous English French interpretation was provided. Mozambique, a Lusophone country, agreed to participate in English to minimise the interpretation costs. A confidential record was developed by the coordination team. Circulation restricted to an approved list only.
SUCCESS	Strong relationships built between task force members. Enabled exchange of information and in-depth discussion of confidential and sensitive situations. Opportunity to dig deep into cases with all countries in the same place led to the uncovering of illegal operations e.g. GREKO 1 operating between Somalia and Kenya.

MEETING TIMELINE

INCEPTION MEETING (pilot phase)	DECEMBER 2012	SEYCHELLES	INITIAL FIVE COUNTRIES (Comoros, Kenya, Mozambique, Seychelles, Tanzania)
TF01	July 2014	MOZAMBIQUE	WITH ALL SEVEN COUNTRIES (Madagascar and Mauritius full members)
TF02	NOVEMBER 2014	MADAGASCAR	
TF03	JULY 2015	KENYA	
TF04	DECEMBER 2015	ZANZIBAR	TOR DEVELOPED
TF05	JUNE 2016	MAURITIUS	SOMALIA JOINED TASK FORCE
TF06	JUNE 2017	SOUTH AFRICA	
TF07	JUNE 2018	MOZAMBIQUE	
JOINT PATROL PLANNING	AUGUST 2018	SOUTH AFRICA	
TF08	MAY 2019	MOZAMBIQUE	



WEST AFRICA TASK FORCE

● HIGH ● MODERATE ● LOW

PRIORITY: ● ● ●

OPPORTUNITY: ● ● ●

EFFECTIVENESS: ● ● ●

ACTIVITY	WATF has held nine task force meetings. FCWC holds an annual Conference of Ministers which is important for validating decisions made at task force meetings, approval for workplans and budgets. WATF funding has contributed financially to these. COVID-19 travel restrictions have led to a pause in task force meetings. An alternative Heads of MCS meeting has been held online on a monthly basis.
PROCESS	Format, discussion and needs were guided by task force members and focus was on reporting on national developments and MCS issues. Decisions and outcomes of the task force were agreed in the meeting. Simultaneous English/French interpretation was provided. Training was provided when possible integrated into the task force meetings. WATF records have been published and are freely available through the FCWC website.
SUCCESS	Strengthening of relationships between MCS officials. FCWC Secretariat took centre stage for the technical team which helped to support their position as regional leaders in fisheries coordination. Initiated the exchange of licence list information. Opportunity to discuss shared regional MCS challenges. Development of regional strategies such as the FCWC strategy to combat illegal transshipment at sea.

MEETING TIMELINE

FCWC MINISTERS MEETING. PROPOSAL TO FCWC MINISTERS FOR THE WATF	DECEMBER 2014	CÔTE D'IVOIRE
TF01	APRIL 2015	GHANA
TOR APPROVED BY FCWC MINISTERS	DECEMBER 2015	
TF02	APRIL 2016	GHANA
TF03	OCTOBER 2016	BENIN
TF04	MAY 2017	NIGERIA
TF05	NOVEMBER 2017	GHANA
TF06	JUNE 2018	TOGO
TF07	NOVEMBER 2018	NIGERIA
TF08	MAY 2019	CÔTE D'IVOIRE
TF09	SEPTEMBER 2019	LIBERIA
HEADS OF MCS MEETINGS	2020 ONWARDS	ONLINE



ONLINE COMMUNICATIONS PLATFORM

COST: **LOW**

CAPACITY REQUIRED: **MODERATE**

EFFECTIVENESS: **SIGNIFICANT**

A secure, confidential online communications platform with access restricted to invited participants made up of task force members and approved regional experts and partners.

HOW	<p>Participation restricted to task force members and affiliated experts.</p> <p>Messages and information are shared in real time.</p> <p>The platform is paid for as a monthly subscription.</p> <p>For both task forces an off the shelf platform, with strong security credentials, was utilised. Branded with the task force logo and information.</p> <p>A manual was prepared for each task force detailing how to use the platform providing an easy introduction for new users.</p>
WHO	<p>Focal points (usually heads of MCS and national decision makers).</p> <p>Task force members decide on composition of the national team and may include members of non-fisheries agencies such as ports, navy or marine police.</p> <p>Technical team.</p> <p>Coordination team.</p> <p>Invited experts.</p>
CHALLENGES	<p>Balance between inclusivity and maintaining security of information.</p> <p>Staff turnover can lead to the wrong people being included.</p> <p>Reluctance or lack of authorisation to share information by task force members.</p> <p>Lack of involvement and/or engagement from senior officials.</p> <p>Low level of bilateral or national level case information.</p>
BENEFITS	<p>Open communication creates transparency.</p> <p>Makes it easy for others to follow up on requests and queries and the nature of the platform provides gentle pressure for action.</p> <p>Creates a record and a searchable archive of task force activity including details of vessels/ non-compliance and IUU incidents.</p> <p>Translation facilitates information exchange between countries that do not share a common language.</p> <p>Realtime information for rapid responses.</p> <p>Avoids bureaucracy.</p> <p>Enables officials to connect easily with the actors in the field, to create strong working links and allow speedy handling of issues.</p> <p>Provides an additional or alternative route to more formal means of communication, which can be slow and ineffective.</p>



FISH-i AFRICA

● HIGH ● MODERATE ● LOW

PRIORITY: ● ● ●

OPPORTUNITY: ● ● ●

EFFECTIVENESS: ● ● ●

ACTIVITY	<p>The FISH-i online communications portal began operations in 2012, connects 71 people from the eight member countries and the technical team.</p> <p>Engagement has focussed around the over 50 investigations that have taken place and countries asking questions for validation by other members or technical team.</p> <p>Used for sharing of information on meetings, media roundups and other relevant information.</p>
PROCESS	<p>First introduced at the inception meeting and practical training shared with all in this meeting, MCS personnel quickly took up use of the platform and engaged in discussions.</p> <p>Later branded as FISH-i.</p> <p>This shared platform was on occasions supported by additional activity behind the scenes to encourage the sharing of information on the portal.</p> <p>The online communications portal has transferred to the SADC MCSCC as part of the merging of FISH-i into this regional mechanism.</p> <p>Agreement on a maximum of eight people from each country to be on the platform.</p>
SUCCESS	<p>Platform used to share licence lists.</p> <p>Use of automatic identification system (AIS) data to identify illegal activity prompted enforcement actions.</p> <p>Cases and investigations followed by all countries on this portal.</p> <p>Generates a rapid response to queries and questions.</p> <p>Ability to spread alerts quickly and widely about high-risk vessels.</p>





WEST AFRICA TASK FORCE

● HIGH ● MODERATE ● LOW

PRIORITY: ● ● ●

OPPORTUNITY: ● ● ●

EFFECTIVENESS: ● ● ●

ACTIVITY

The WATF online communications platform began operations in 2015, connects 50 people from the six member countries and the technical team.

It is based on the same system and setup as FISH-i.

The bilingual coordination team provide rapid translation.

The task force members share queries and questions for other countries and the technical team, and these are rapidly answered.

Engagement focuses on information requests, which on average are made weekly.

Used for sharing of information on meetings, media roundups and other relevant information.

PROCESS

Translation of messages is provided on all WATF messages.

Supported by additional activity behind the scenes to encourage the sharing of information on the portal.

SUCCESS

Provides alerts on high-risk situations, particularly to incidents of piracy within the Gulf of Guinea region.

Cases and investigations followed by all countries on this portal.

Queries and requests received rapid responses enabling enforcement action and decision making.

Led to a genuine sense of connection between task force members.



TECHNICAL TEAM

COST: MODERATE

CAPACITY REQUIRED: HIGH

EFFECTIVENESS: SIGNIFICANT

Accessible, knowledgeable experts available to provide specialist support in response to needs identified by task force members.

HOW

Requests for support made through task force meetings, through discussion with the technical team or via the online communications platform.

Urgent advice provided through telephone, messaging or email support.

Systematic support offered for training and mentoring.

Training workshops organised in conjunction with partner organisations who can offer additional or specialist expertise or capacity.

WHAT

Legal expertise and guidance to provide support to investigations and legislative reviews.

Support to engage with, and provide evidenced based input into, international agreements and processes.

Provision, compilation and analysis of shared information and intelligence, such as licence lists.

Provision of in-depth analysis on IUU and fisheries crimes in the region and access to information from databases and analysis, including the TMT FACT database.

Research on agreed areas of interest and development of material for publishing and using in presentations and awareness.

Support in developing procedures for due diligence and risk assessment.

Awareness and publicity including drafting of press releases.

Capacity building, mentoring, and training events and activities.

Remote or in-person support to vessel inspections.

Development of tools and support materials.

CHALLENGES

Scarcity of expert capacity.

Time and resources.

Experts highly in demand so at times busy on other work areas.

BENEFITS

Flexible support with the ability to respond to unexpected or urgent situations.

There for task forces to draw on – not prescribing what to do but supporting national decisions and actions.

Enables wider access to information, databases, analysis.

International expertise brings fresh ideas and creates two-way awareness of issues and on the ground capacity.

Aware, confident, knowledgeable fisheries officers and allied agencies ensure that illegal operators are identified, and where possible, enforcement action is taken.

Cooperation between FISH-i and WATF has allowed for the development of shared training resources for use in both regions.

Practical training exercises build confidence and procedural knowledge.


Real life scenarios are explored and practised in real life situations.

Practical and technical publications and training materials have been developed to support fisheries enforcement.

Avoids bureaucracy.

Enables officials to connect easily with the actors in the field, to create strong working links and allow speedy handling of issues.

Provides an additional or alternative route to more formal means of communication, which can be slow and ineffective.

  **FISH-i AFRICA** ● HIGH ● MODERATE ● LOW

PRIORITY: ● ● ●

OPPORTUNITY: ● ● ●

EFFECTIVENESS: ● ● ●

ACTIVITY

Technical team led by SIF provided a diverse group of experts strong in intelligence provision, operations and knowledge of the region.

Technical team was able to connect quickly to additional support when required.

Provision of research and analysis of FISH-i investigations to provide unique and cutting-edge evidence-based input into international and regional processes.

Experts available in the region to respond quickly to practical requests for assistance when required.

PROCESS

Capacity available in most countries so provision of remote expert support was adequate in many cases to support national action.

Ongoing support into investigations and links to other agencies were key in progressing cases over several years.

Legal and policy support was required as cases evolved.

SUCCESS

Use of AIS data to identify illegal activity prompted enforcement actions.

Over 50 cases and investigations occurred with support from the technical team.

Rapid response to concerns possible.

Research into various issues of concern in the region, such as supply and support vessels, the Taiwanese fishing fleet, and transshipment.

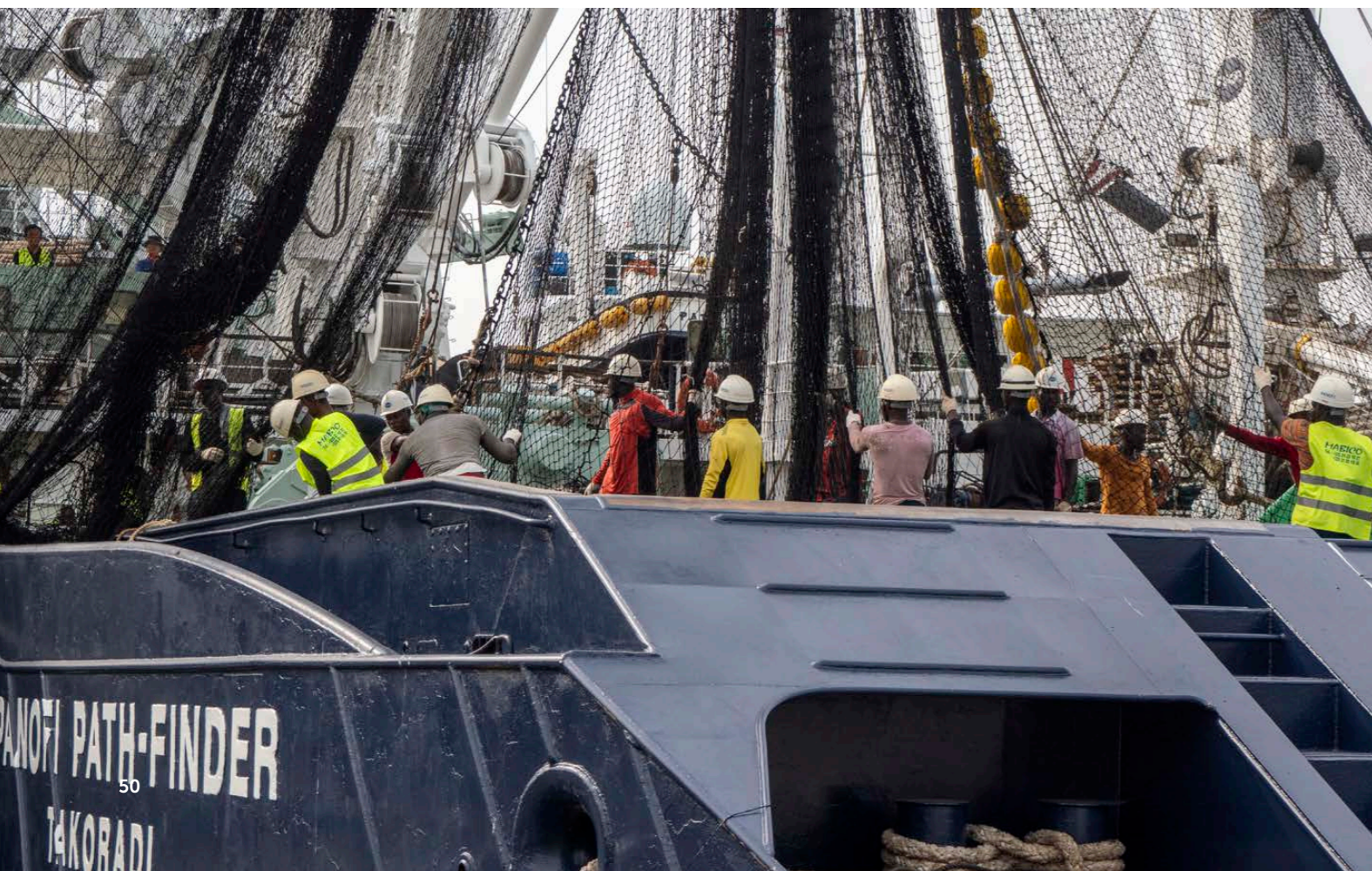
Publication of high-quality reports on the work and outcomes of the task force.

Inspiring confidence to take enforcement action or continue investigations.

Training provided in task force meetings to improve procedures and practices e.g., collection of evidence, photographing documents and vessels.

Media roundups to highlight current issues, activities, and events.

Drafting of press releases to support awareness around investigations.





WEST AFRICA TASK FORCE

● HIGH ● MODERATE ● LOW

PRIORITY: ● ● ●

OPPORTUNITY: ● ● ●

EFFECTIVENESS: ● ● ●

ACTIVITY

Technical team led by TMT provided bilingual experts strong in intelligence provision and regional experience.

Technical team members based within the FCWC Secretariat provide direct links to member states.

Retired MCS personnel engaged as national experts to provide in-country support.

Research into the regional situation helped to create greater understanding about the fisheries and issues of shared concern.

PROCESS

Greater need to build capacity as the region had not benefited from the same level of project support as the WIO.

Technical team was able to garner further support from partners for capacity building.

Training events included as part of the project design, with regional and national and training events held on a regular basis.

Inclusion of national non-fisheries agencies in capacity building events.

SUCCESS

Support to due diligence processes related to licensing and registration vessels has introduced more systematic checking.

Increased national level capacity to conduct intelligence gathering and analytical work, strengthening MCS operational capabilities.

Bespoke training provided to improve procedures and practices e.g., collection of evidence, photographing documents and vessels, risk assessment, collection of evidence and building a case for prosecution.

Resources have been created to meet the needs of the task force and are made easily accessible to all alongside wider resources.

Inter-country exchanges.

Toolbox of resources developed, including training material on e.g., port inspections, technology, interpretation of AIS and VMS data.

Technical papers developed in response to task force requests on e.g. transhipment, reefer activity.





WHAT

WHAT A TASK FORCE DOES

The operations of a task force will depend to some degree on the shared task of the task force and the local environment, funding and so forth. However, from the experience of FISH-i and WATF the following activities were important for both – routine sharing of information, monitoring of vessel activity, supporting investigations and actions, working with national agencies, international training and engagement, training and mentoring and research analysis and understanding – each is introduced and compared here.



ROUTINE SHARING OF INFORMATION

COST: **LOW**
 CAPACITY REQUIRED: **LOW**
 EFFECTIVENESS: **HIGH**

Regular face-to face meetings to bring together representatives from task force countries, with the technical team and others, including invited observers and experts.

WHY	To provide a regional overview of vessel activity and operations. Cross-check information to identify discrepancies and potential fraud.
WHAT	Share Information on licensed vessels. Share information on flagged vessels. Share vessel documents and photographs. Share intelligence and alerts, including intelligence reports (INTREPS) prepared for potential high-risk vessels and cases.
CHALLENGES	Resistance to sharing – ingrained culture of confidentiality and secrecy. Poor quality of information with errors and duplications.
BENEFITS	Encourages open sharing of previously private information. Move towards transparency. Cross checking of information. Develop common understanding of where IUU risks lie.



FISH-i AFRICA

● HIGH ● MODERATE ● LOW

PRIORITY: ● ● ●
 OPPORTUNITY: ● ● ●
 EFFECTIVENESS: ● ● ●

PROCESS	This was a new concept at the start and the national agreement for sharing took longer in some countries to obtain. As more countries shared information this became the norm and vessel lists were mostly shared on a regular basis. The technical team provided intelligence reports (INTREPs) when requested and routine monitoring of the EEZs enabled regular intelligence alerts if high risk behaviour was identified.
SUCCESS	Identified illegal activity. Identified high risk and IUU listed vessels. Identified vessel identity fraud.



WEST AFRICA TASK FORCE

● HIGH ● MODERATE ● LOW

PRIORITY: ● ● ●
 OPPORTUNITY: ● ● ●
 EFFECTIVENESS: ● ● ●

PROCESS	As with FISH-i there was resistance with some countries to share information on flagged and licensed vessels, in this case because the fishing vessels operational in different EEZs varied between countries. The regional convention on information sharing provided the basis. The technical team provided INTREPS when requested and routine monitoring of the EEZs enabled intelligence alerts if high risk behaviour was identified.
SUCCESS	Cross-checking information with other countries and organisations led to investigations and enforcement actions. Active sharing of country level information is a significant first step to increasing transparency and trust.



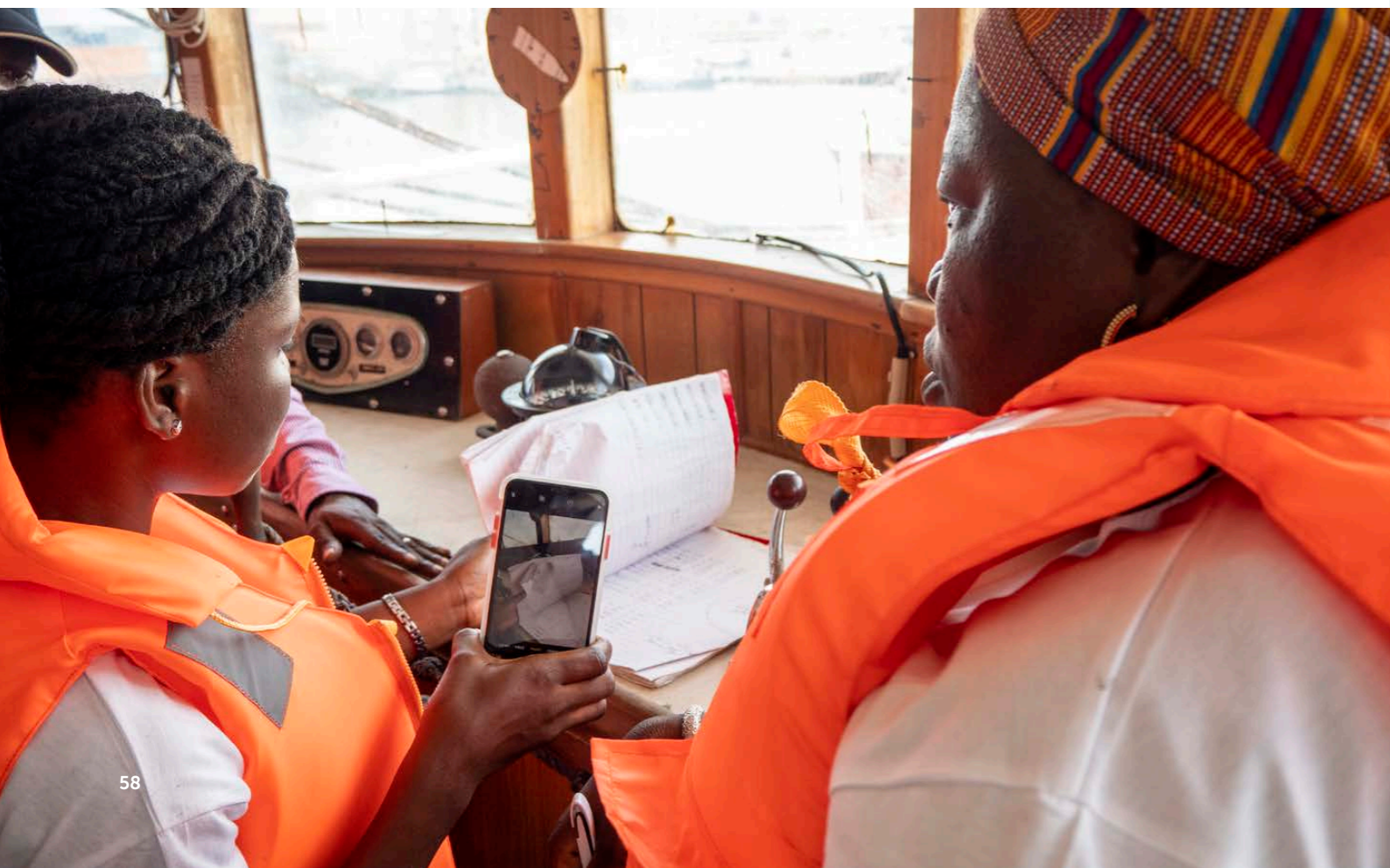
MONITORING OF VESSEL ACTIVITY

COST: **MODERATE**

CAPACITY REQUIRED: **HIGH**

EFFECTIVENESS: **HIGH**

WHY	Use technology, such as AIS, to identify illegal fishing and support further investigation into cases. Regional overview of vessel activity through regular analysis and tracking of positional data. Shares the cost of access to databases and national VMS – best if developed regionally.
WHAT	Avoid overlap. Cross check between information sources. Share resources, understanding, experience, information
CHALLENGES	Due to lack of access to this information at national level, they are less familiar with it. Limited functioning VMS to use for validating AIS and other information.
BENEFITS	Access to databases that would be too expensive for single countries to access. Technical team able to analyse the information and to combine different data sources. Technical team able to source far wider resources due to their networks and internal work in TMT and Stop Illegal Fishing.



FISH-i AFRICA

● HIGH ● MODERATE ● LOW

PRIORITY: ● ● ●

OPPORTUNITY: ● ● ●

EFFECTIVENESS: ● ● ●

PROCESS	Pioneered the use of AIS to track vessel activity and illegal fishing. Limited functioning VMS in the region. Provided regular updates on vessel activity and alerts on suspicious behaviour and vessels.
SUCCESS	Led to a large number of investigations and enforcement action, including the Identification of a fake licensing operation in Tanzania. Showed patterns for fishing activity and port calls. Highlighted issues such as AIS turn offs and ghosting where vessels try to hide their activity. Identified significant fleet of unauthorised vessels in the Somali EEZ. Identified fleet targeting squid in unregulated fishery in NWIO. Identified cases of vessel identity fraud.



WEST AFRICA TASK FORCE

● HIGH ● MODERATE ● LOW

PRIORITY: ● ● ●

OPPORTUNITY: ● ● ●

EFFECTIVENESS: ● ● ●

PROCESS	Limited functioning of VMS in countries. Technical team provided regular updates on vessel activity and alerts on suspicious behaviour and vessels. Additional focus on reefer movement and transshipping at sea.
SUCCESS	Use of AIS data to identify illegal activity prompted enforcement actions. Highlighted hotspots for e.g., transshipment and bunkering. Building picture of maritime domain to feed into maritime security initiatives. Demonstrated that fisheries operations are linked to other countries and regions, requiring cooperation beyond the WATF.



SUPPORTING INVESTIGATIONS AND ACTIONS

COST: **MODERATE**

CAPACITY REQUIRED: **HIGH**

EFFECTIVENESS: **HIGH**

WHY	<p>The joint involvement in investigations by task force countries enables more information to be shared to enable investigations to progress to enforcement action.</p> <p>Weak legislation can be strengthened through invoking regional commitments in a joint manner.</p> <p>Technical team support to strengthen investigations and support to inspections.</p> <p>External assistance can be acquired if needed, e.g., from other agencies or international bodies to assist with investigations.</p>
WHAT	<p>Share resources, understanding, experience, information.</p> <p>INTREPS prepared for potential high-risk vessels and cases.</p> <p>Support for investigations and additional analytical skills.</p>
CHALLENGES	<p>National sensitivities.</p> <p>Lack of political will.</p> <p>Corruption.</p>
BENEFITS	<p>Expert support enabled investigations into complex cases that cross jurisdictions.</p> <p>The transparency engendered by task force operations keeps investigations in the task force domain and increases accountability.</p>



FISH-i AFRICA

● HIGH ● MODERATE ● LOW

PRIORITY: ● ● ●

OPPORTUNITY: ● ● ●

EFFECTIVENESS: ● ● ●

PROCESS	<p>Task force members were keen to take action against IUU.</p> <p>FISH-i has worked on over 50 investigations, often with other countries or partners, 22 of these have been documented to demonstrate the scale and complexity of illegal operations.</p>
SUCCESS	<p>The support and cooperation with investigations has enabled MCS officers to take enforcement action resulting in penalties in cases that would otherwise have fallen aside.</p>



WEST AFRICA TASK FORCE

● HIGH ● MODERATE ● LOW

PRIORITY: ● ● ●

OPPORTUNITY: ● ● ●

EFFECTIVENESS: ● ● ●

PROCESS	<p>The cooperation is at an earlier stage of development and investigations have played less of a role in the WATF.</p> <p>Most vessels are based in only one or at most two countries. As a result, many cases are at national level or bilateral, and therefore are not generally raised via the online communications platform. Support is offered to national agencies as needed.</p>
SUCCESS	<p>The mechanisms for support are in place and ready to be applied when investigations are required.</p> <p>Although fewer high profile IUU cases were exposed, targeted inspections and follow-up investigations and verifications involving several States within and outside the FCWC region have taken place at a sustained level.</p>



WORKING WITH NATIONAL AGENCIES

COST: **MODERATE**

CAPACITY REQUIRED: **MODERATE**

EFFECTIVENESS: **MODERATE**

WHY	<p>IUU fishing is often linked to associated crimes, such as document forgery, money laundering, tax evasion and human trafficking. Fisheries authorities alone cannot detect and fight these illegalities effectively.</p> <p>Implementing port state measures requires cooperation with port authorities and often other agencies such as maritime affairs and marine police.</p> <p>At sea patrols require cooperation with navies and coastguards.</p>
WHAT	<p>Build capacity in and support national fisheries authorities to gather, analyse and interpret fisheries information in support of MCS and enforcement operations and legal processes with assistance from the technical team.</p> <p>Identify key stakeholders.</p> <p>Organise regular meetings bringing relevant agencies together.</p> <p>Identify the necessary structure for the cooperation. For some countries a Memorandum of Understanding is required, for others the mechanism requires approval by different government agencies.</p> <p>Early meetings will focus on information sharing and building understanding of agency roles.</p> <p>It is useful to identify a priority focus area for discussions and the development of active cooperation, such as port state measures.</p>
WHO	<p>The composition of interagency groups will vary according to national situation and priority issues. Key partners are likely to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fisheries • Port authorities • Maritime affairs • Navy or coastguard • Marine police • Justice • Customs • Immigration
CHALLENGES	<p>Engaging relevant stakeholders can be difficult.</p> <p>Setting up processes between agencies can be time consuming and difficult.</p> <p>Formalising cooperation takes time, and the process can easily stall or stop.</p>
BENEFITS	<p>Enhanced MCS efficiency and law enforcement make investigations and prosecutions more effective.</p> <p>Improved implementation of port state measures including the ability to deny port access and use when required.</p> <p>Better communication and cooperation between agencies.</p>



FISH-i AFRICA

● HIGH ● MODERATE ● LOW

PRIORITY: ● ● ●

OPPORTUNITY: ● ● ●

EFFECTIVENESS: ● ● ●

PROCESS	<p>The task force, worked with the national interagency cooperation that was in place, (e.g. the multiagency task team (MATT) in Tanzania) but did not actively develop it.</p> <p>Tackling dynamite fishing in Tanzania required multiagency cooperation.</p> <p>The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) supported training for investigations and legal aspects to fisheries and police personnel</p>
SUCCESS	<p>Joint training of personnel in regional course, created greater familiarity with investigative processes for fisheries personnel.</p> <p>On specific cases national interagency cooperation was successfully used e.g. in 2021 an Iranian flagged fishing vessel was arrested in Tanzania by the navy with more than one tonne of heroin on board, following cooperation with FISH-i.</p>



WEST AFRICA TASK FORCE

● HIGH ● MODERATE ● LOW

PRIORITY: ● ● ●

OPPORTUNITY: ● ● ●

EFFECTIVENESS: ● ● ●

PROCESS	<p>The WATF helped to establish 'National Working Groups' in each member country or supported existing cooperative mechanisms such as the Fisheries Enforcement Unit in Ghana.</p> <p>Most countries have formally established their cooperation through legal instruments or integrated them into broader interagency cooperation mechanisms (e.g., linked to maritime security or blue economy).</p> <p>Regular meetings held incorporating discussions and trainings.</p> <p>Priority focus on strengthening port controls has emerged.</p>
SUCCESS	<p>Increased national level capacity to conduct intelligence gathering and analytical work, strengthening MCS operational capabilities.</p> <p>Greater awareness of IUU fishing as an issue, and of the value of losses being inflicted through illegal fishing.</p> <p>Increased knowledge about the modus operandi utilised in illegal fishing and related activities.</p> <p>Better operational procedures for evidence collection, data analysis and inspections.</p>



INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND ENGAGEMENT

COST: **MODERATE**

CAPACITY REQUIRED: **HIGH**

EFFECTIVENESS: **MODERATE**

WHY Illegal activities in the fisheries sector present major challenges for law enforcement because many vessels have foreign links in terms of their flags, ownership and crew. Cases can involve a vessel licensed by one country, flagged by another, owned by a company in a third country, with agents, captains and crew from yet more countries.

Jurisdiction is complex and international cooperation is required to crosscheck and validate information, to provide authorisations (licences, port access) and to take enforcement action.

Fish and seafood are often exported to international markets and imports for local consumption come from all over the world.

WHAT Encouraged participation and engagement of international agencies and organisations, such as within the technical teams, as observers at meetings, or in training events.
Shared experiences from the task forces within regional and global discussions and processes.
Strengthened links with international organisations.
Encouraged intelligence sharing as appropriate outside of the task force regions.
Facilitated links and communication with flag States.
Raising shared issues at RFMO meetings.
Communication with INTERPOL on IUU listed and Purple Notice vessels.

CHALLENGES Most contacts are linked to individuals and relationships and can easily be lost when people move on.
Some external states are not communicative, and either do not respond to requests for cooperation or do the bare minimum.
COVID-19 reduced opportunities for people to meet and build relationships.

BENEFITS Establishment of communication channels and contacts with flag and port states.
Known points of contact for rapid response to queries.
Increasing awareness about the global nature of IUU fishing and fisheries crimes.



FISH-i AFRICA

● HIGH ● MODERATE ● LOW

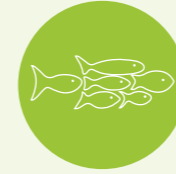
PRIORITY: ● ● ●

OPPORTUNITY: ● ● ●

EFFECTIVENESS: ● ● ●

PROCESS Understanding who the key players (flag and market states) are is important.
Identifying difficult communications channels.
Sharing information about the task force and the work with other states at meetings.

SUCCESS Engagement of key flag States at task force meetings.
Improved cooperation with key flag and port states through meetings and ongoing communication (e.g., at IOTC meetings, FAO Committee of Fisheries).
Responsive action against illegal operators.
Development of known contact points making communication faster and more reliable.



WEST AFRICA TASK FORCE

● HIGH ● MODERATE ● LOW

PRIORITY: ● ● ●

OPPORTUNITY: ● ● ●

EFFECTIVENESS: ● ● ●

PROCESS Encouraged participation and engagement of international agencies and organisations within the WATF technical team and in regional training events.

SUCCESS Some exchange of information between other regional organisations such as the Sub Regional Fisheries Committee (SRFC), International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) and FISH-i Africa.
Exchange of information bilaterally between WATF countries and relevant states.
Participation and engagement of international agencies and organisations.



TRAINING AND MENTORING

COST: **HIGH**

CAPACITY REQUIRED: **HIGH**

EFFECTIVENESS: **SIGNIFICANT**

WHY	MCS officials work at the frontline of fisheries enforcement and require regular training in new approaches, methods and technology, and as far as possible, continuously available mentors to assist with the challenges and complexity of MCS work, especially when fisheries crimes are involved.
WHAT	<p>Training workshops and online courses.</p> <p>Bespoke training provided to improve procedures and practices e.g., collection of evidence, photographing documents and vessels.</p> <p>Ongoing mentoring and support.</p> <p>Remote support for in port inspections and at-sea patrols.</p> <p>Inter-country exchanges.</p> <p>Toolbox of resources.</p> <p>Development of practical training material such as manuals and phrasebooks.</p>
CHALLENGES	<p>High cost and time involved.</p> <p>Limited availability of suitable trainers and mentors, who need to know the regions well and have useful and appropriate experience.</p> <p>Limited MCS staff and turnover of staff.</p>
BENEFITS	<p>Increased national level capacity to conduct intelligence gathering and analytical work, strengthening MCS operational capabilities.</p> <p>Resources have been created to meet the needs of the task force and are made easily accessible to all alongside wider resources.</p>



FISH-i AFRICA

● HIGH ● MODERATE ● LOW

PRIORITY: ● ● ●

OPPORTUNITY: ● ● ●

EFFECTIVENESS: ● ● ●

PROCESS	<p>Regular support and mentoring through phone support to investigations.</p> <p>Training at task force meeting and occasional additional training when possible.</p> <p>Use of body worn cameras to provide remote support to inspections.</p> <p>Support to at-sea patrols.</p>
SUCCESS	<p>In-country inspection support in the case of the GREKOs.</p> <p>Regular mentoring of MCS officials across 50 cases, in respect to process and actions to build confidence and capacity.</p> <p>Use of body worn cameras has allowed continued inspection support during COVID travel restrictions.</p>



WEST AFRICA TASK FORCE

● HIGH ● MODERATE ● LOW

PRIORITY: ● ● ●

OPPORTUNITY: ● ● ●

EFFECTIVENESS: ● ● ●

PROCESS	<p>In-country and remote phone support for in port inspections.</p> <p>Remote support to at sea patrols.</p> <p>Greater focus on training as need to build capacity identified.</p> <p>Regional trainings.</p> <p>Emphasis on training for use of AIS and VMS, use of intelligence to inform planning and decision making, and port controls and risk assessment.</p>
SUCCESS	<p>Introduction of regular reefer inspections in several countries.</p> <p>Development of inspection, case building and chain of custody processes.</p> <p>Provision, training on and active use of MCS equipment to support port controls.</p> <p>Integration of regular AIS, and laterally (in some countries) VMS monitoring.</p> <p>Provision of training across agencies, and development of training skills and programmes for fisheries agencies to provide training to other agencies.</p>





RESEARCH, ANALYSIS AND UNDERSTANDING

COST: **MODERATE**

CAPACITY REQUIRED: **HIGH**

EFFECTIVENESS: **SIGNIFICANT**

WHY	To provide analysis and reflection. Build region specific knowledge. Feed into national, regional and international policy processes. Create a regional viewpoint to identify common problems and common solutions.
WHAT	Research – questions, either emerging from cases or being asked by the task force, often lead to research being undertaken. Insight – discussions about what constitutes illegal fishing and fisheries crime, and how best to address them, are still being formed. Awareness – making findings public increases transparency and awareness and motivates action. Evidence-based analysis to determine the steps needed to ensure all fishing is conducted according to the rules. Media roundups to highlight current issues, activities, and events.
CHALLENGES	Time and resources to conduct research.
BENEFITS	Research contributes to improve understanding and catalyse debate about illegal fishing. Provide useful evidence-based research for the task forces to present in international processes.



FISH-i AFRICA

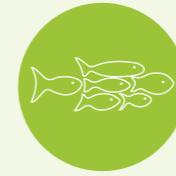
● HIGH ● MODERATE ● LOW

PRIORITY: ● ● ●

OPPORTUNITY: ● ● ●

EFFECTIVENESS: ● ● ●

PROCESS	Issues identified at task force meetings, and through analysis of investigations. Research conducted by small teams, led by the technical team, input from the task force as required. If information is deemed suitable for publishing, Stop Illegal Fishing has prepared public domain reports and used media and meeting opportunities to share the reports.
SUCCESS	Published reports have provided a substantial body of evidence on how IUU fishing takes place, that can be used to inform policy, legal and operational planning. FISH-i has shed light on the scale and complexity of illegal activities that is useful to inform regional and global processes and thinking, including on the types of illegality, the modus operandi of illegal operators and a focus on corruption. Internal research papers have informed discussion on e.g., supply and support vessels, Taiwanese fishing vessels, legal gaps and the benefits and challenges for coastal states in flagging fishing vessels.



WEST AFRICA TASK FORCE

● HIGH ● MODERATE ● LOW

PRIORITY: ● ● ●

OPPORTUNITY: ● ● ●

EFFECTIVENESS: ● ● ●

PROCESS	Material has been developed for internal use during task force meetings such as on transshipment and reefer operations. TMT has garnered further support for funding of targeted research including reefer operations and beneficial ownership structures. Research into information for the public domain lead by the technical team.
SUCCESS	Published information on the FCWC region has significantly improved the understanding about the fishery resources and challenges for IUU fishing including a focus on transshipment.



SUCCESS



UNDERSTANDING SUCCESS



The regional task force model provides a sound framework for developing regional cooperation to stop IUU fishing, but success needs to be measured against the aims of the task force, the starting position, progress and impact made.

Whilst activities themselves can be useful indicators of advancement towards targets, holding a meeting or providing information is not an end in itself – an effect, action or shift is required.

BEING EFFECTIVE

KEEPING ONE STEP AHEAD OF THE ILLEGAL OPERATORS as modus operandi are adapted to exploit weaknesses in MCS. At the start of FISH-i the use of AIS to identify and act against illegal fishing was novel with vessel operators making no effort to turn off or mislead tracking devices. Now AIS is routinely switched off to hide the location or activity of vessels and signals are ‘spoofed’ or falsified.

GROWING OF TRANSPARENCY AND TRUST which is critical to counter the silent challenge of corruption. Half of the FISH-i investigations found strong suggestion of corruption and understanding the dynamics of corruption will help with introducing anti-corruption activities. Uncovering these activities could not have happened without trust and support and people willing to take risks and make a stand against intimidation and bribery.

ADDING VALUE to the day-to-day work of MCS officers is critical to retain engagement and confidence and to enable participation in events such as task force meetings. Activities of the task force must be useful and effective for those involved: the task force is not intended to add new work for MCS officials but to provide additional capacity to their routine work.

ACTING AGAINST ILLEGAL OPERATORS to demonstrate it is possible to stop illegal fishing. FISH-i set out with the goal of taking enforcement action against illegal operators, and the focus of efforts was on identifying and pursuing cases of illegal fishing and related crimes. It has developed an impressive case load, which provides a valuable body of information for policy making and operational planning. It has disrupted operators and networks, creating disincentives for illegal fishing. Yet the sanctions imposed have been limited and many of the criminal actors are still active.

LEADING BY EXAMPLE to model positive behaviour, such as sharing information usually regarded as confidential (such as licence lists). Developing a positive professional peer group where MCS officers can look to others to guide them in best practice will have long lasting impact, as a new culture of cooperation and empowerment will prevail.

CELEBRATING SUCCESS within the task force and with the wider world. Not only will this erode the confidence of illegal operators it will also inspire others, widen the cooperative circle and strengthen resolve.



EMBEDDING CHANGES

TAKING A STEPWISE APPROACH allows a responsive and adaptive structure. The task force, by nature is a steppingstone to allow change and is not the end goal. The aim is to move from acting alone, to acting cooperatively and collaboratively when beneficial: not to cooperate for the sake of cooperating.

MAKING CHANGE STICK BY TAKING ADVANTAGE OF OPPORTUNITIES to embed mechanisms or elements of the cooperation in permanent structures is advisable. Whilst MCS cooperation will clearly sit within dedicated regional MCS centres, there may be additional opportunities to create systematic cooperation between states or between national agencies. For both FISH-i and WATF to find homes within newly established MCS centres has been a big win.

SUCCESS CREATES ITS OWN PROBLEMS and can result in political interference as IUU operators exert influence and control. It can expose and create tensions, as the people who are benefitting from e.g., turning a blind eye to undersized fish being offloaded, or to drugs coming into ports via fishing vessels, feel under threat. Conflicts can occur between agencies, due to sensitivities, domain power competition, and legal frameworks that result in overlapping mandates.

MAINTAINING INTEREST once the cooperation is established may be an issue as stakeholders lose the initial excitement and engagement. Keeping funding partners engaged may also be challenging as regional or focus priorities develop and the desire to replicate may be stronger than to continue funding an existing mechanism.



SHARING EXPERIENCES

THE IMPACT OF IUU FISHING CAN BE DEVASTATING on human, economic, social and environmental fronts. Improving understanding and awareness of the value of fisheries (to livelihoods, economies, food and nutrition) and the nature and consequences of illegal fishing and associated criminal activity. Links to transnational organised crime link fisheries offences to wider maritime and human security issues.

THE BLUE ECONOMY has added expectations of growing revenue streams from ports, flagging and licensing of vessels. Fisheries need to be included in the discussion so that understanding of the challenges and complexity of illegal fishing are included in decision making.

THE AFRICAN EXPERIENCE feeds into international policy and planning. Considering the development agenda and implementation needs of developing States is critical to balanced and long-term success.

LEARN LESSONS FROM WHAT HASN'T WORKED AS WELL AS FROM SUCCESS. The freedom to experiment and build on what does work while leaving behind unsuccessful initiatives helps build effective cooperation. Some investigations do not result in a successful penalty or prosecution but the lesson learning about where and when the system fails is vital for deciding how to improve.

COMPARING SUCCESS

The two task forces had different start points and focus. Success and progress can be seen in different ways.

	FISH-i	WATF
<p>● HIGH ● MODERATE ● LOW</p> <p>STRONGER ORGANISATIONS</p> <p>The success of the WATF has been significant in supporting the development and influence of the FCWC and contributed to the establishment of the RMCSC.</p> <p>Without an institutional home FISH-i has not played a role in organisational development in the same way, but support to the regional processes has supported the push towards the development of a SADC MCSCC.</p>	●	●
<p>IMPROVED COMMUNICATION CHANNELS</p> <p>Online communications platforms have proved very effective in making sure that the correct people are contacted, and responses are fast. Phone, messaging, emails and WhatsApp are also used as needed. These are straightforward, low cost tools to continue communicating after the life of the task force.</p> <p>Task force meetings are valuable in building relationships and trust.</p>	●	●
<p>INCREASED OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY</p> <p>Monitoring of vessel positional data, sharing of licence lists and cross checking of information</p>	●	●
<p>EMBEDDED MECHANISMS AND PRACTICES</p> <p>This is being achieved through integration of task force mechanisms into regional MCS centres.</p>	●	●
<p>IMPROVED CHECKS FOR KEY DECISIONS ON LICENSING, PORT ENTRY AND USE, REGISTRATION</p> <p>Significant benefits have been achieved through cross checking and sharing of information on high-risk vessels. This will be increased further when more systematic pre-licensing and flagging checks are undertaken and regional standards and criteria are agreed.</p> <p>Commitment to an implementation of international agreements, such as the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate IUU Fishing (PSMA) and Cape Town Agreement (CTA) will further entrench best practice.</p>	●	●
<p>EXPOSURE OF NON-COMPLIANCE</p> <p>Exposure of non-compliance and the techniques used has been significant from the FISH-i experience, where the systematic and organised nature of offending has been demonstrated.</p>	●	●
<p>INCREASED NATIONAL ABILITY TO ACT AGAINST ILLEGAL OPERATORS</p> <p>Better follow through on cases has increased national expectation to take action if illegal operators are detected and evidence gathered to enable an arrest or prosecution.</p>	●	●
<p>BETTER KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING CONTRIBUTING TO NATIONAL AND REGIONAL POLICY AND INTERNATIONAL PROCESSES</p> <p>The research and publications of both task forces has made a significant impact to improve understanding in general.</p> <p>FISH-i analysis of evidence has enabled new understanding about how IUU operators work.</p>	●	●

FISH-i AFRICA SUCCESS



FISH-i Africa has been operating for almost a decade and there have been some standout moments, when cooperation worked, when things happened, and change was made.

GETTING GOING AND GROWING

FISH-i was an opportunistic endeavour. This isn't to suggest that it wasn't well thought through, needed, and wanted or any lack of commitment from the key participants. But its early success was driven by a group of champions whose dynamic marked the spirit of the kick-off meeting in Seychelles in 2012. Minister Sinon provided the political commitment, coastal state MCS officials provided enthusiasm and skills, NFDS, Stop Illegal Fishing, TMT, the IOTC Secretariat and TRAFFIC provided technical input and knowledge and the IOC SmartFish and Pew provided funding. Together this group was excited and driven to push for change. This momentum led quickly to an expansion from the original five countries to welcome Mauritius and Madagascar and increase the power of the task force.

BRINGING DIFFERENT THINGS TO THE PARTY

Around the world there were a few individuals pioneering the use of AIS tracking to follow fishing vessels and while the results were interesting, little was being achieved with them. This all changed when TMT started sharing their vessel tracking information with Stop Illegal Fishing, who in-turn reached out to their network of African MCS officials and professionals, this connection enabled on-the ground officials inspecting fishing vessels in ports to validate what was being seen remotely. However, this alone was not enough, for action to be taken a combination of policy and legal arguments needed to be crafted and placed at the table of decision makers – it was the mix of these things that enabled FISH-i to prosper.

OUR FIRST SUCCESS: PREMIER

PREMIER, a purse seine vessel was caught fishing illegally in West Africa and then attempted to relocate to the WIO. The network of the newly formed FISH-i was already on the alert, and the FISH-i countries worked together to stop the PREMIER continuing its fishing activities and refusing any fish from the vessel to enter the market through their ports. This was the first case when FISH-i members acted together and showed the true power of cooperation. It was a high-profile case with significant results, including the payment of a sizeable fine to Liberia by the owner, and the spurring of action by the flag State, South Korea to amend their laws.

THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS

One of the benefits of the technical team was their ability to connect the MCS officials with international and regional partners and organisations to work together on IUU fishing, transnational organised crime, and maritime security issues. In the early stages of FISH-i the cooperation with INTERPOL's Project Scale, which was also supported by Pew and later the close cooperation and information sharing with the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC) in Madagascar made an enormous difference to the ability of the region to gather intelligence, liaise and connect on investigations, leading to arrests, prosecutions and confiscations of vessels and catch.

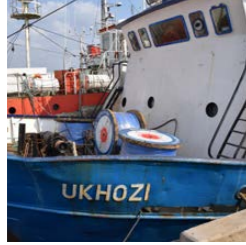
WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The NAHAM-4 investigation highlighted the extent of vessel identity fraud occurring in the fishing industry. The vessel, a Taiwanese-owned tuna longliner, was detained and later confiscated by South African authorities due to uncertainty about its identity. At least four other vessels were identified as having operated with the name NAHAM-4. Understanding the extent of vessel identity fraud and the implications for MCS work informed the priorities and focus of the task force.

SOMALIA – THE MISSING PIECE OF THE PUZZLE

The Somali EEZ has long been targeted by illegal operators who take advantage of the lack of controls and governance. When Somalia joined FISH-i in 2016 the opportunity to fact check the activity and authorisations of several vessels operating between Somalia and Kenya were made possible. One such case was that of the Belize flagged GREKO 1 and GREKO 2. Known to be active in Somali waters for several years, in 2016 when a EU navy patrol provided Somalia with sightings of fishing vessels in their EEZ the vessels' operations were analysed. A port inspection of the vessel in Mogadishu established that illegal fishing had taken place throughout 2016, and a USD 65,000 fine was paid. Investigations into the vessels revealed that both GREKO 1 and GREKO 2 vessels were listed as 'scrapped', and for this the owners had received EUR 1.4 million under a EU capacity reduction scheme.



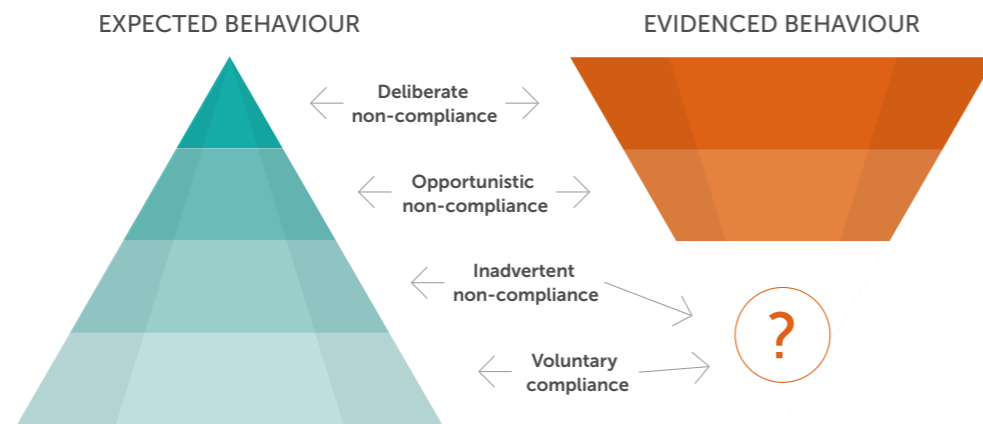


CONTRIBUTING TO A SUCCESSFUL REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL OPERATION

After initial arrest by Chinese authorities the STS-50, a vessel IUU listed for its role as a carrier vessel for toothfish poachers in the Southern Ocean, fled to the WIO. Using false information and fake documents the vessel sought bunkering and repairs from ports in the region and was thought to be operating as a fishing vessel. With all FISH-i ports on high alert, the vessel headed for Asia. Using AIS tracking, FISH-i was able to follow the movements of the STS-50 contributing to the vessels ultimate arrest by the Indonesian Navy.

TURNING THE TRIANGLE UPSIDE DOWN

Analysis of the FISH-i investigations, undertaken in 2017, revealed the systematic nature of illegal activity in the WIO. A significant number of operators deliberately falsify information, forge documents, and hide company information behind secretive shelf companies and flags of non-compliance.



To counter this, targeted efforts and systematic crosschecking of vessel information is needed and FISH-i demonstrated that conducting vessel inspections and cross checking and verifying documents is the most effective and lowest cost means of identifying and stopping the illegal operators.

SEEING THE TRUTH ABOUT CORRUPTION

While FISH-i investigations are mainly concerned with IUU fishing, information suggesting that corruption is closely intertwined with the fisheries illegality and crime was regularly found. The wealth of information accumulated through the investigations, over many years, provided the material needed to make a more in-depth analysis into where, why, and by whom corruption was suspected to have occurred. For example the case of the fake licensing scheme uncovered in Tanzania. At a time when the threat of piracy was considered the reason for low numbers of longline fishing vessels obtaining licences to fish in Tanzanian waters, a large and organised network distributing fake documents through corrupt practises was exposed. As a direct result of this exposure, many vessels that had been fishing in Tanzanian waters with fraudulent fishing licences were forced to obtain legal fishing licences from the Tanzanian authorities, increasing government revenue and improving control over the country's fisheries.

BEING RECOGNISED

International recognition on the contribution of FISH-i Africa to stopping illegal fishing has validated the efforts made by so many and brought great pleasure to the task force.

On awarding the **FAO Margarita Lizárraga Medal 2014-2015** to Stop Illegal Fishing the FAO stated that 'Stop Illegal Fishing was selected in recognition of an excellent African example of what can be achieved to stop IUU fishing by demonstrating that a lot can be accomplished with relatively small resources through good networking, the sharing of information, regional and international cooperation, and a strong commitment to stop IUU fishing.'

In 2017 FISH-i received the **Seafood Champion for Innovation award**. Nicholas Ntheketha, Chairperson of FISH-i Africa expressed gratitude on behalf of the task force for receiving this award. "Creating a sustainable seafood sector is at the core of our work in FISH-i. By the cooperation we have achieved in our region we are tackling the working practices of some of the worst illegal operators in the fisheries world. It's a tough job for the inspectors who are on the front line; they are dealing with serial offenders and sophisticated gangs who are systematically taking advantage of the system and breaking laws in order to fish illegally. This recognition of the part FISH-i Africa play in creating a sustainable seafood industry is really encouraging."

REALISING THE GOAL

FISH-i was always envisaged as a stopgap between the commitments made under the SADC Statement of Commitment in 2008 and the realisation of the SADC MCSCC. In November 2017, SADC Ministers for Environment and Natural Resources, Fisheries and Aquaculture, and Tourism committed to signing the Charter, and approved the establishment of the Interim Project Management Unit (IPMU) to advance the operationalisation of the SADC MCSCC. The SADC Ministers in June 2019 approved the recommendation to incorporate the FISH-i Africa Task Force mechanisms into the MCSCC and a roadmap for operationalising this over the next three years. The inclusion of FISH-i will bring a real momentum to the Centre as it will integrate an established and proven system for cooperation and information exchange to kick-start activities of the centre.

FISH-i



INTERNAL FACTORS: STRENGTHS

PEOPLE

- High level interest from the region – for engagement and wish for action.
- The task force members already knew each other from previous SADC, IOTC and SWIOFC work, and there were strong existing relationships.
- Some sage and experienced people in the task force who were prepared to push the extra mile for action.
- Considerable peer pressure to do the right thing.
- Task force quickly grew from five to seven members.
- Increasing to eight countries, by bringing Somalia on board was a big step for regional inclusion and appreciation that IUU crosses boundaries.
- Diverse and inclusive technical team with members well known by task force members and in region, and a strong history of trust.
- Cooperation between state and non-state players has strengthened the regional response to IUU fishing.

INSTITUTIONS

- Strong state and non-state actor cooperation.
- Good engagement of broader regional actors (IOTC, IOC, RMIFC etc).
- The IOTC Secretariat were fully engaged providing an important anchor.
- Stop Illegal Fishing as leaders were African and well established through their role as the IUU working group for the AU and NEPAD.

ACTIVITIES

- Communications portal was set up quickly and worked.
- Cases that have required, and resulted in, active cooperation.
- Used AIS at the start of AIS becoming used for fisheries MCS, this helped to make an impact and build momentum.
- Media was used to get exposure and demonstrate success.
- There was significant global interest in FISH-i.



INTERNAL FACTORS: WEAKNESSES

GOVERNANCE

- Different quality of national legislation to support action.
- Different levels of political support in task force countries with sector governance weak in some countries.
- Political interference into MCS and taking action.

INSTITUTIONS

- Overlapping institutional coverage, leading to gaps and duplication, confusing institutional roles.
- Unhealthy competition between regional organisations for funding and control of MCS.

PEOPLE

- Some countries MCS officials were less committed than others.
- Competition to get or to keep vessels in national ports and EEZs for tuna.
- Politically dependent on ‘champion’ ministers who leave a political vacuum if they are reallocated from fisheries.



EXTERNAL FACTORS: OPPORTUNITIES

PEOPLE

- Interagency cooperation lessons from WATF.
- To create a culture and a social norm to motivate individuals to stand against corruption.

INSTITUTIONS

- Links to AU and wider support with SADC etc.
- SADC MCSCC and widening membership, particularly South Africa and Namibia as key port states in Africa.
- Maritime security initiatives providing complementary platforms and assets.
- Implementation of the PSMA is a global priority.
- Implementation of CTA and International Labor Organization (ILO) standards.
- Strong international recognition.

RESOURCES

- Funding from PEW was fluid and a lot for some time.
- Synergy funding from other regional projects, such as PSMA implementation.



EXTERNAL FACTORS: THREATS

GOVERNANCE

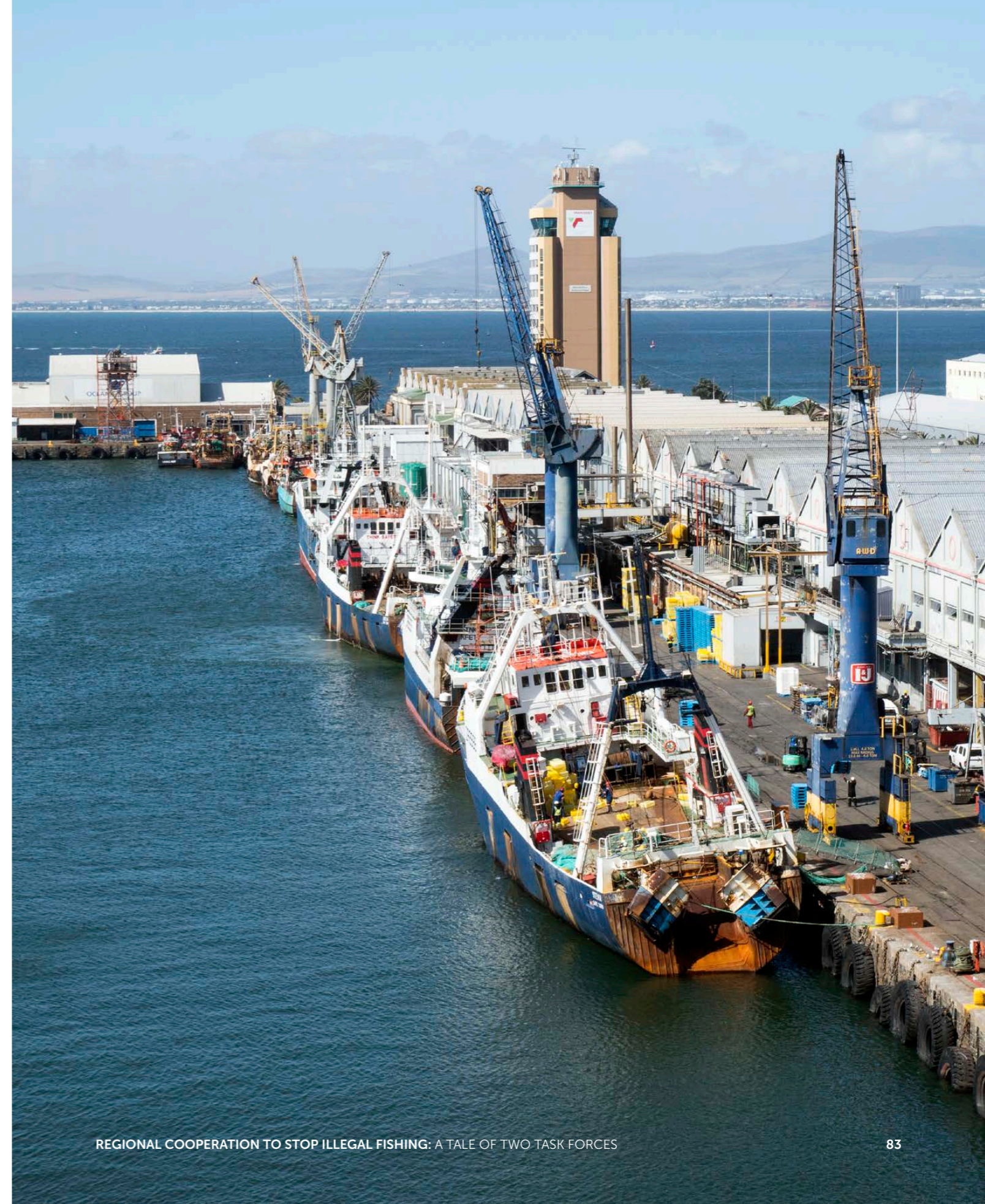
- Corruption when successful cases interfered with business as usual.
- Political interference.
- Corrupt in the maritime sector in some countries.
- Success created resistance from certain flag states and high-level politicians, who were assumed to have a conflict of interest.

INSTITUTIONS

- Intergovernmental organisations competing for control of regional WIO MCS.
- Powerful organisations with strong agendas can dominate the political and operational environment.
- Weak interagency cooperation and links between fisheries and port authorities, police etc.
- Limited MCS platforms to act outside of ports.
- Island versus coastal state priorities.
- SADC MCSCC and non-FISH-i countries may take time to build engagement and trust.
- Changing national and political priorities.
- Blue economy misunderstood, driving for increase in fishing effort for short term financial gain.
- Pressure from industry and geopolitical relationships creating pressure for countries to not share information.
- Political interference slowing or hindering IUU cases.
- Infrastructure and development funding needs can be at odds with protecting natural resources.

RESOURCES

- No direct funding mechanism creating project dependence (and lack of this in recent years).
- Funders keener to replicate the model elsewhere rather than build on the success.



WATF SUCCESS



NOTORIOUS IUU-LISTED VESSEL DENIED PORT ACCESS

During an interagency training exercise in Togo in 2016 a fishing vessel anchored off the port of Lomé in Togo was identified as RAY – a notorious poacher vessel, placed on a risk vessel list for fishing illegally in the Southern Ocean in 2006, and more recently in the Southeast Atlantic. Working together for the first time, the fisheries, port and navy departments boarded the vessel and obtained documentation to prove its identity (and new name, YELE). While there were no indications that the vessel had acted illegally whilst in Togolese waters, the authorities decided that the risk of illegal fishing was too high. Togo, having ratified the PSMA only days earlier, refused further port access and YELE was ordered to depart Togolese waters. WATF members and neighbouring states were alerted in case the vessel should attempt to call in to another port in the region. The vessel was subsequently denied port access in Nigeria and Liberia, leaving the region to be abandoned in Sierra Leone.

NIGERIA TAKES THE LEAD ON IMO NUMBERS AND AIS

In a move designed to control Nigerian flagged fishing vessels Nigeria's federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Department of Fisheries has made it mandatory for all eligible national or state flagged fishing vessels to obtain and mark international maritime organization (IMO) numbers on their vessels on or before the start of March 2017. Immediate benefits from the change in regulation were experienced, e.g. during the arrest of the Nigerian flagged vessel Star Shrimper XXV by Liberia with support from Sea Shepherd, the IMO number made it easy to get detailed information about the vessel. At the same time, in the absence of a national VMS system, the mandatory use of AIS for fishing vessels operating in Nigeria was implemented, suddenly 'lighting up' fishing activity along the coastline. Subsequently, the application of IMO numbers by other FCWC states has resulted in around 80 per cent of eligible fishing vessels in the FCWC region having an IMO number.

CELEBRATING SUCCESSFUL COOPERATION

To mark the tenth anniversary of the FCWC, a celebration of the role played by the member states as well as significant individuals and organisations who have contributed to the successful establishment of the FCWC as a regional fisheries organisation. The Honourable Elizabeth Afoley Quaye, Minister Fisheries and Aquaculture Development, Ghana presented the awards at a ceremony held during the FCWC Ministers Conference in Abuja, Nigeria in December 2017. FCWC Secretary General Seraphin Dedi Nadjé stated, "Partnership has been at the heart of the success of the FCWC. I would like to offer my warm thanks to all those who have contributed to the development of the FCWC. Together we will continue to pursue the objectives of fisheries cooperation in West Africa."

TRANSHIPMENT: A REGIONAL STRATEGY FOR A REGIONAL ISSUE

Developed in response to the growing recognition of at sea transhipment as a major challenge for sustainable management of fisheries, and as a potential facilitator of illegal fishing and a means for illegally caught fish to enter the supply chain. Unauthorised at-sea transhipment is taking place between industrial fishing vessels who tranship catch to avoid oversight and inspection with fish being moved to refrigerated transport vessels, other industrial fishing vessels or to small scale fishing vessels and transport canoes. A regional strategy to tackle transhipment at sea was agreed by ministers. It will tackle the issue through the harmonisation of national legislation, the sharing of information and through stronger requirements for VMS and AIS for fishing vessels.

STRONG REGIONAL SUPPORT TO THE PSMA

As the first binding international agreement to specifically target IUU fishing the PSMA has received significant support in the region. With four FCWC members now party to the agreement, one a signatory and one in the process of acceding. This is a tremendous achievement highlighting the commitment of the region to block illegal actors from ports.

NORWEGIAN PRIME MINISTER RECOGNISES WATF COOPERATION

The Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg paid a visit to the Ghana MCS Centre and the FCWC headquarters in June 2019, during her official visit to Ghana to expand the cooperation on fisheries between the two countries. Prime Minister Solberg emphasised the importance of collaboration and cooperation on fisheries between neighbouring countries, sharing experiences and adapting effective solutions to their situations. During the meeting acknowledgement of the impact of Norway's support to the FCWC through funding support to the WATF was recognised. It has enabled FCWC to develop into an effective regional organisation, pushing the regional agenda to achieve sustainable natural resource management, the SDGs, and promoting international governance initiative.

SUPPORT FOR KEY IMO TREATY ON VESSEL SAFETY

A team from the FCWC attended the Ministerial Conference on Fishing Vessel Safety and IUU Fishing, organised by the IMO and the Government of Spain, in Spain, in October 2019. The conference aimed at promoting the ratification of the Cape Town Agreement, a key IMO treaty for the safety of fishing vessels. Prior to this meeting (September 2019) only 11 states had ratified the internationally binding instrument. The agreement will provide an international mandatory regime making it easier for effective control and monitoring of fishing vessel safety standards. At the meeting 46 countries including four FCWC member states – Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo – signed the declaration denouncing the proliferation of IUU fishing, indicating their determination to ensure the agreement enters into force by 11 October 2022.



COOPERATION LEADS TO RESCUE OF 18 KIDNAPPED CREW

In May 2020, the FCWC, through the regional online communications platform established under the WATF successfully facilitated the arrest of 10 hijackers of the HAI LU FENG 11 vessel, rescuing 18 crew members. The FCWC alerted all its member states to the pirate attack after fishing vessel had failed to respond for two days. Analysis of the vessel's track led agencies to believe the vessel was headed toward the Nigerian EEZ, the authorities were alerted and the Nigerian navy ship NGURU was deployed to intercept and rescue the hijacked vessel.

EQUIPPING AND CONNECTING NATIONAL FISHERIES AGENCIES

To support communications and capacity building efforts, communication rooms with virtual facilities are being established in the Fisheries Agency of each FCWC Member State. Equipped with key conferencing and training facilities, the communications rooms will support the ability for the Member States to regularly interact between themselves, the FCWC Secretariat and the WATF technical team – for example through monthly Heads of MCS meetings. Virtual training programmes are being established to run through these facilities. Crucially, the communication rooms will also support broader communication efforts and needs, for example for communicating with international partners, and participation in international forums.

ESTABLISHING A REGIONAL MCS CENTRE

The RMCSC builds on the WATF as an important next step in regional cooperation and is a key development in FCWC efforts to combat illegal fishing. The RMCSC is host to the regional VMS, which provides a regional overview of vessel activity for the first time, by incorporating the sharing of fishing vessel licence lists which was initiated by the WATF. This will be supported by a number of other activities that will support and empower national MCS officers to take action against IUU. With the establishment of the RMCSC, dedicated equipment for national fisheries monitoring centres is being provided for national access to the regional VMS and AIS, key vessel tracking tools. For many of the States, this is the first time that they will have access to this technology and capabilities to monitor fishing vessels in their waters. Funding for the RMCSC has been provided through the Programme for Regional Fisheries Governance in Western Africa (PESCAO), a five-year, EU funded initiative, implemented with the ECOWAS.

WATF



INTERNAL FACTORS: STRENGTHS

PEOPLE

- Membership composed of high level MCS officers and fisheries directors has stayed the same.
- Strong state and non-state actor cooperation.

INSTITUTIONS

- FCWC provide legitimate local secretariat with a mechanism for calling meetings.
- Strong institutional anchorage as the MCS arm of FCWC, operationalising Conventions, and endorsement by member countries.
- FCWC already had a legal framework and information sharing is backed by conventions and protocols.
- Annual FCWC Ministerial Conference provides political backing and annual approval of activities.
- FCWC operate in close cooperation with FAO.
- The WATF has become the focus for all regional MCS support initiatives.
- WATF mechanisms are being fully integrated into the new monitoring centre.

ACTIVITIES

- Swift information exchange through online platform.
- Basecamp was successful early – easy to use and worked.
- Interagency groups at national level developed as task force appendages, allowing direct engagement of and access to relevant agencies and facilitating information sharing.
- Provides a regional discussion platform for broader FCWC initiatives.
- The new monitoring centre activities fuels the task force exchange of information.





INTERNAL FACTORS: WEAKNESSES

PEOPLE

- Lack of regional trust and cooperation at an operational level.
- A culture of formal dialogue reducing informal interactions and so taking longer for relationships to develop.
- Turnover of national MCS personnel due to national reshuffling or officers being appointed to new positions, with limited transfer of knowledge.
- Varying levels of capacities and engagement across member States.
- Difficulty accessing sufficient human resources to support all processes or cases.
- Initial interagency cooperation needed a focus and common purpose.

INSTITUTIONS

- FCWC lacked MCS expertise to start with – now growing.
- MCS expertise external or project based.
- Non-binding framework and decisions due to FCWC status.
- WATF focus was on industrial sector only where shared problems were not always obvious.
- Anglophone and Francophone countries have different legal frameworks, institutional structures, and working practices, which can impact on decision making.
- FCWC members do not want to expand the task force to non-FCWC members, which may limit the opportunity to tackle IUU within the region.

RESOURCES

- FCWC is funded through member states contributions, which are not always paid.
- FCWC reliant on project funding to support staff and overheads.



EXTERNAL FACTORS: OPPORTUNITIES

INSTITUTIONS

- FCWC-ECOWAS institutional relationship, and ECOWAS endorsement of the task force model.
- Maritime security cooperation was well underway in the region.
- To build FCWC institutionally and create new opportunities for growth and recognition.
- To develop the individuals within task force and FCWC Secretariat.

ACTIVITIES

- Maritime security initiatives providing complementary platforms and assets.
- Increased information sharing and enforcement cooperation.
- National fisheries legal frameworks updated, or in the process of being updated, allowing for increased opportunities to extend MCS capabilities and prosecute cases.
- PSMA

RESOURCES

- ECOWAS and the growing cooperation with FCWC and the EU PESCAO project.
- WATF has helped to catalyse new funding to the region and FCWC.
- The development of the RMCSC gives long-term sustainability options.
- Ongoing development aid projects focused on fisheries providing complementary expertise and support.



EXTERNAL FACTORS: THREATS

GOVERNANCE

- Pressure from illegal operators to undermine the partnership and threaten those in it.
- Limited political will among member States to implement MCS operations.
- Sector governance and corruption.
- Pressure from industry and geopolitical relationships creating pressure for countries to not share information or conduct fisheries enforcement.
- Changing national / political priorities result in higher and lower levels of participation in/ dedication to task force activities.
- Political interference slowing or hindering IUU cases resulting from task force activities or recommended courses of action.
- Competition between countries for vessels/operators.

INSTITUTIONS

- Risk that new initiatives/players in the region do not use/support the task force, creating potential overlaps and inefficiencies.
- Risk that maritime security initiatives will supersede MCS activities with the new monitoring centre.

PEOPLE

- Language and cultural differences between anglophone and francophone members.
- Limited MCS platforms to act outside of ports.
- COVID has resulted in a more national rather than regional focus.

RESOURCES

- Lack of long-term funding and countries not prepared to fund the RMCSC into the future.
- Changing funder priorities.
- Dominance of Ghana as the receiver of international funds and projects.



REGIONAL COOPERATION TO STOP ILLEGAL FISHING: A TALE OF TWO TASK FORCES

BUILDING ON SUCCESS



The success of regional cooperation and regional task forces to tackle illegal fishing raises the question of how this success can be capitalised upon, and what other applications may be made of the model.

EVOLUTION INTO PERMANENT MECHANISMS

Task forces are by their very nature a transitional mechanism, testing the concept for change and exploring what works and how cooperation can best be advanced. In the cases of both task forces their functions and mechanisms are set to evolve into permanent regional MCS centres, for the FISH-i Africa into the regional economic community of the SADC's MCSCC and for the WATF into the fisheries advisory body of the FCWC's RMCSC.

BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

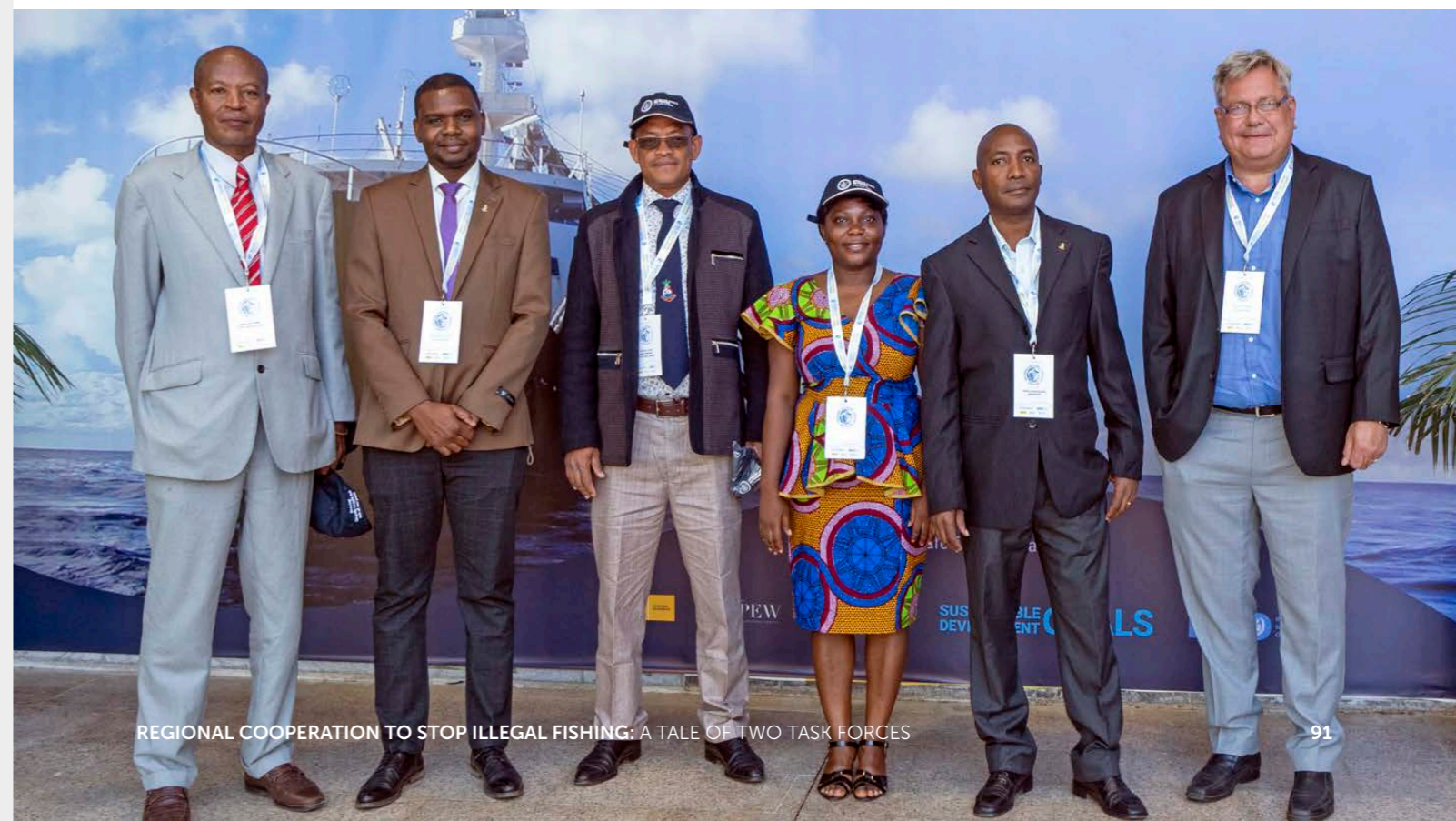
- Provides official sanction of the cooperation, making information sharing and participation by national authorities easier to achieve. This may result in losing the informal, voluntary nature of cooperation, which can lead to a more motivated task force.
- Less reliant on short-term project funding, leading to the potential for longer term more entrenched change.
- Move to a more collaborative way of working, with initiatives such as minimum terms and conditions for licensing vessels negotiated and enforced regionally.
- For the WATF the FCWC RMCSC brings significant operational benefits, including providing VMS to countries that previously have not had it, and the opportunity to further increase regional capacity as tasks previously undertaken by experts from outside of the region become part of daily RMCSC procedures.
- For FISH-i the integration into the SADC MCSCC will bring a massive expansion of reach, with ten coastal states and an additional six land-locked inland states. This may bring the risk of dilution of purpose as focus is widened to include the Atlantic and more mixed fisheries.
- For FISH-i the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) have provided funding support through the WWF to the SADC MCSCC which is helping to ensure that the mechanisms established can be further developed and implemented.
- For WATF the EU PESCAO project and Norad support are providing technical, capacity, mentoring and staff support to the FCWC RMCSC to ensure integration into national fisheries monitoring centres, and to build long term sustainability.

CONNECTING NETWORKS

The close ties between the FISH-i and West Africa task forces, through common members of the technical and coordination teams, has led to easy exchange of information between the two regions. This has had direct benefits on investigations and in providing support to members in managing flagged or licensed vessels. The growth of inter task force cooperation throughout Africa and with other geographic regions will be beneficial as owners, operators and vessels operate internationally.

BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

- Encouraging and facilitating the sharing of information and cooperative action will help counter the lack of transparency within the fisheries sector.
- Sharing experience between members and across regions shows common patterns of behaviour, helps to identify and act against operators using weak flag and port States, and showcases successful strategies in stopping IUU fishing.
- The ability to share alerts on high-risk vessels means that known IUU operators can be targeted and put out of business.
- There are challenges in coordinating and keeping contact lists up to date as staff change.



ADDITIONAL APPLICATIONS

The possibility of using task forces for national or regional cooperation to address other issues has already been explored through the establishment of WATF National Working Groups to facilitate interagency cooperation to stop IUU fishing. The Ports Task Force Ghana has also been developed with the specific aim of facilitating effective implementation of the PSMA and developing strong working relationships and procedures between relevant national agencies.

The SADC MCSCC will roll out and adopt a task force approach to tackling illegalities and criminality on inland fisheries. With many shared water bodies, such as Lake Malawi and Lake Victoria, cooperation between neighbouring countries and the issues of MCS for a shared fishery are similar.

The potential for utilising task force mechanisms to address other forms of wildlife, natural resource or transnational crime are significant. FISH-i investigations demonstrated the link between transnational crime and IUU fishing through the definition of related and associated crimes and the involvement of fishing vessels in recognised trafficking routes and networks for wider crimes.

BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

- National agencies are often competitive and work in silos, introducing mechanisms for information exchange and developing contacts will bring benefits.
- Complex international investigations can take a long time to move from identification to enforcement action, and frequently lose momentum or are abandoned as other priorities arise. Having an established mechanism for conducting shared investigations will increase the likelihood of success.
- Having an agreed and shared purpose is essential to forming a successful cooperation and tackling specific networks, including corruption networks, within regions that link to the fisheries sector may prove beneficial.
- Bringing groups together comes with a high cost so keeping the discussion focussed on genuinely cooperative actions is important.



AFTERWORD



Dr. Motseki Hlatshwayo

The development of this report provides a timely opportunity to reflect on the development and evolution of the FISH-i Africa and the West Africa Task Forces. By taking stock of their many achievements we can fully appreciate the contribution made by these two initiatives to forge new ways of working, and to overcome some of the most challenging barriers to tackling the insidious problem of IUU fishing.

In the SADC, regional cooperation is our mantra. It is affirming to witness this task force cooperation in action. We can see how vital it is to take the brave steps needed, of sharing information more openly, of sharing intelligence and pushing for effective action and better prioritisation and targeting of effort.

Thanks to FISH-i we now know how important it is to conduct thorough checks on vessels before we allow them to operate in our region. Simple, but systematic checks really can weed out some of the most hard-core illegal operators. These processes, alongside the online communications portal, regular meetings and technical support will be assimilated into the SADC MCSCC so that we can continue to advance the regional cooperation and investigative success of FISH-i.

We will also carry forward the FISH-i spirit. The legacy of pioneering individuals with a real will to get things done, to take action and make a difference. Their contribution is less easy to capture on paper, but they continue to inspire us. They have set high standards that encourage the rest of us to do our jobs better and to make the most of the opportunities we have.

We have also witnessed the importance of cooperation between state and non-state actors. Without our partners in Stop Illegal Fishing and Trygg Mat Tracking and the generous support of The Pew Charitable Trusts and The Waterloo Foundation FISH-i would not have been possible. It has been well demonstrated that we are all working towards common goals.

The road to the establishment of the SADC MCSCC has been long, but we arrive with solid experiences that leave us well placed to continue at the forefront of fighting illegal fishing. The move to extend the cooperation to include more coastal states and inland fisheries provides a chance to utilise all the experience of the past and generate some of our own.

We continue to work for our common future. We know we are stronger together.

Dr. Motseki Hlatshwayo

Senior Fisheries Advisor
Southern African Development
Community Secretariat

AFTERWORD



Dr Aboubacar Sidibé

Fish is an important and highly traded food commodity that has significant social and economic implications in every country and across all social and economic spheres. As a renewable natural resource, fish are vulnerable to overexploitation and damage to their ecosystem can have impacts beyond the fish stock being caught. In West Africa fish has particular importance as livelihoods of millions of people: fish and fishing are part of the fabric of our culture, our economy, and our security.

The efforts undertaken within the FCWC to fight IUU fishing and to make cooperation successful are significant. It is through the success of the WATF that we have gained the support and trust of the EU to fund the more permanent FCWC RMCS. This in turn allows us to advance the efforts against illegal fishing even further, through regional vessel monitoring and a dedicated staff of analysts and technical experts who can support national MCS efforts as well as spur on the regional cooperation.

The FCWC and the WATF have also developed strong cooperation with the ECOWAS maritime security initiatives and centres in the region. This is vital as the threat of piracy continues to increase. The ability to share information on fishing vessels is integral to true maritime domain awareness and the robust channels of communication make sharing alerts and time sensitive information very efficient. This in turn benefits our at-sea operations and enforcement operations.

As we look to the future the potential for Africa's blue economy is at the forefront of growth agendas. Having stringent controls in place to safeguard our fisheries against over exploitation and to safeguard the interests of our people needs to be a priority too. The value of established and effective regional cooperation is immense. It protects our precious resources and our people.

We have also seen effective cooperation between funders and projects in the region. The EU support to the PESCAO project was set up to complement the Norwegian funding to the WATF. These projects support our efforts and increase the benefits.

The positive experiences gained through the WATF cooperation form a solid basis for ongoing and future cooperation. This makes us all stronger. We have greater knowledge, greater capacity, and greater will to act against IUU fishing.

Dr Aboubacar Sidibé

Senior Policy Officer
FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture
Department

TIMELINE OF COOPERATION



SADC region commitment to stop IUU fishing

SADC
Statement
of Commitment
on IUU fishing



FISH-i Africa Task Force



West Africa Task Force

2007

2008

Convention for the
establishment of
the FCWC

FCWC commitment to stop IUU fishing

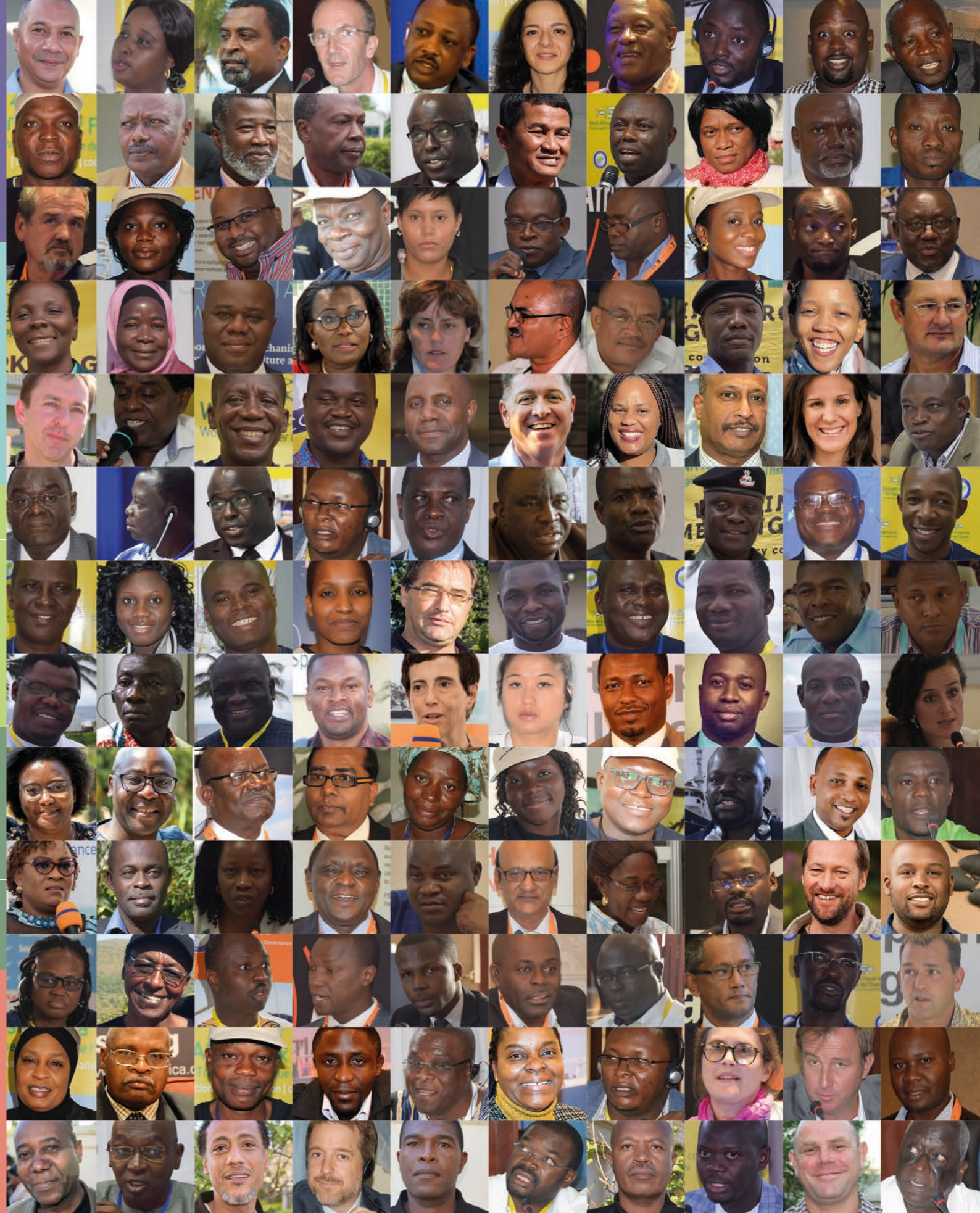


International instruments for global action and *Pan African frameworks for continental strategic change

International
Labour
Organization
Work in Fishing
Convention (C188),
[2017]

Djibouti Code
of Conduct
concerning the
Repression of
Piracy and Armed
Robbery against
Ships in the WIO &
the Gulf of Aden*

[date] = Entry into force



TIMELINE OF COOPERATION



SADC region commitment to stop IUU fishing



FISH-i Africa Task Force



West Africa Task Force

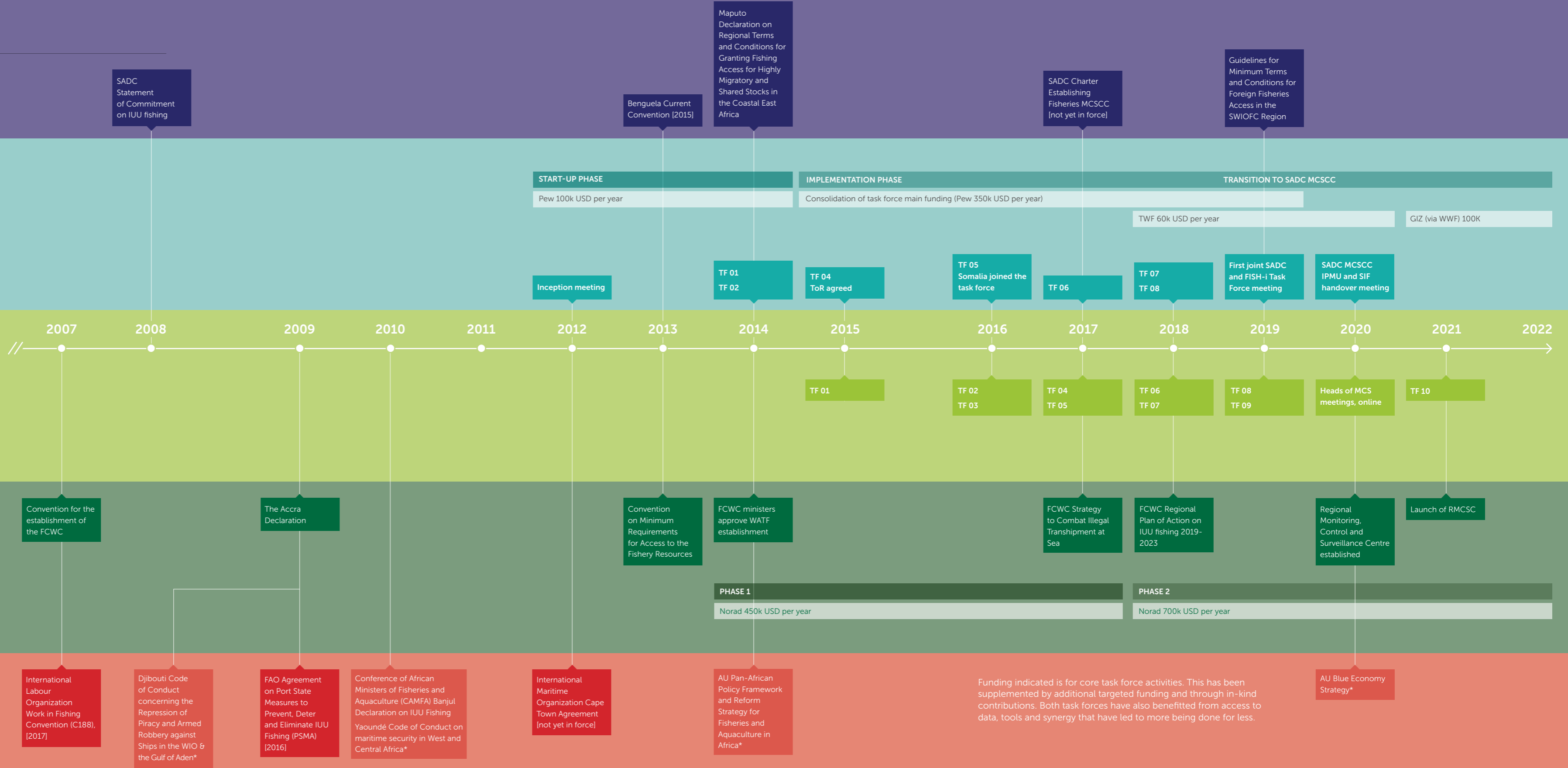


FCWC commitment to stop IUU fishing



International instruments for global action and *Pan African frameworks for continental strategic change

[date] = Entry into force





The experiences of the FISH-i and West Africa Task Forces provide lessons on the role and impact of regional cooperation in stopping illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. One lesson is very clear: it is thanks to the individuals who have led, participated, engaged, believed and stuck with the process, even when times are challenging, that we have come as far as we have.