



**LIBERIA NATIONAL WORKING GROUP
CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP
Monrovia, 21st July 2016**



Overview of the conference room

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Introduction

Within the framework of the project 'Fisheries Intelligence and Monitoring Control and Surveillance Support in West Africa' supporting the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC) West Africa Task Force (WATF) initiative, a national workshop was organised in Monrovia as part of the implementation of project activities. On July 21st, 2016 the workshop was held at the Liberia Coast Guard's Conference room, with a focus on introducing the WATF concept to the Bureau of National Fisheries inter-agency partners, and strengthening national inter-agency cooperation.

Present at the meeting were representatives of the Bureau of National Fisheries, Interpol NCB (National Police), Liberia Port Authority, and Liberia Coast Guard, the Liberia Maritime Authority's regional maritime security centre, and Seaport Security. Unfortunately, the Liberia Maritime Authority was not able to attend.

After welcoming participants and thanking them for their presence at the session, Mr Glasgow Togba, Head of Marine Fisheries for the BNF recalled the objectives of the workshop which were to introduce the WATF initiative, map out the MCS situation in Liberia, show linkages between fisheries crimes and illegal fishing and finally show how cooperation between agencies can be efficient and is a crucial element to fight effectively against IUU Fishing and broader fisheries crimes.

Mr Duncan Copeland, Chief Analyst of TMT, and member of the Technical Team supporting the West Africa Task Force thanked the BNF for hosting the meeting, and the FCWC for the strong partnership and cooperation. He reiterated his strong will to help West Africa countries to fight against IUU fishing and he noted that the WATF was an opportunity to not only show illegal operators that the FCWC countries are now united and no longer working individually to control fisheries, but also that at the national level cooperation between national agencies is crucial. Only by having the combination of national and regional action by the countries in the region can illegal operators be stopped.

After Mr Copeland's address, the workshop activities started with a brief presentation of the project features.

II- Proceedings

2.1 Presentations

Presentation 1: Key features of the project

Mr Copeland in a short summary presented the "Fisheries Intelligence and MCS support in West Africa project" that led to the establishment of the West Africa Task Force (WATF). The West Africa Task Force brings together the six member countries of the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC) – Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Togo – to tackle illegal fishing and fisheries crime. The Task Force is facilitated by the FCWC Secretariat and supported by a Technical Team that includes TMT, Stop Illegal Fishing and NFDS with funding from Norad. The project and the WATF objectives were presented, as well as key structures and implementing partners, and the regional communication platform that has been set up to help the six countries sharing information, Basecamp.

Presentation 2: Intelligence input and information sharing

A summary of activities within the period of June 2015- June 2016 was presented, showing 108 fishing vessel events found on AIS inside Liberian waters. While the majority of vessel entry events appeared

to transit Liberian waters, 20 incidences were found to either have been in port Monrovia, or indicating being active inside national waters.

Patterns of various fishing vessels were presented explaining vessels movements. During the period mentioned above it has been recorded 1- trawler events, 2 longliners events and 2 unknown vessels type events. At the end of the introductory part on vessels activities in national waters, a question was asked to help the participants understand the importance of “Intelligence”

What is fisheries intelligence?

This presentation aimed to define Fisheries intelligence, which is a process of collecting information on fisheries operations to identify areas of possible violations and to inform MCS operations. Fisheries intelligence is a valuable tool to assist fisheries enforcement agencies in the performance of their daily duties. Thus, they contribute to the identification of risk in fisheries and where limited resources can be most effectively used. Therefore, intelligence can inform where further investigation is required and point to where evidence of crime can be collected. However, intelligence can be useless when it's not accurate, not analysed, or presented in an unusable format. Mr Copeland then explained, the phases of the process of intelligence which are definition of assignment, collection, processing analysis and dissemination for use in the planning of operations or prosecution of cases.

Discussions: During the discussions a question was raised on the high risks in Liberian fisheries enforcement currently. In response to the question the followings comments were given by the participants:

- Issue with inter agency collaboration
- Limitation with the collaboration, proactive collaboration on operations. E.g. on the trawler fishing
- Imports; a lot of products are coming from Guinea Bissau

In order to address the risks, the participants recommended a better collaboration within agencies regarding the imports and raised the fact that the crucial element for success is information sharing. Using an example of a fishing vessel recently operating in Liberian waters, it demonstrated step by step how analysis can help identify different types of fishing vessels.

Presentation 3: Basecamp

The regional communications platform Basecamp which helps facilitate information sharing between the countries was presented. While historically information may have been shared between countries it was not structured or stored, and was at a bilateral level. The Basecamp platform facilitates regional communication, archives all messages and attachments, and ensures that the full history of each communication is captured. All communication come through a personal email addresses.

The current status of activities, the representatives and types of information that can be shared on the platform were also presented. The user guidelines providing framework for the information sharing and cooperation through the platform was circulated.

Liberia has currently 4 persons on Basecamp (all fisheries), while the number of representatives can be up to 7 with representatives from other agencies. It was stated by the BNF that this would be reviewed and additional representatives would be sent to the Technical Team as soon as possible.

Discussions: A question was asked on how prompt can a background check can be made and receive a feedback on Basecamp from the Technical Team. The response was given that the Technical Team aims to provide a response as quickly as possible, targeting 24-48 hours to any request posted on Basecamp. It can take longer but the TT always share initial findings and continue developing information while the country that made the request is informed. An example of Cote d'Ivoire fishing vessels fishing in Benin, authorised for pelagic but fishing tuna was discussed as a case that different stages of information were shared

One of the issues raised during the discussions was the transshipment by containers, and that although it's a really new field, it's important to look at it. It was noted that the UNODC has a big system of management of containers and that TMT had discussed cooperation with them at the first international symposium on fishcrime.

The issue of inter-agency roles was raised based on the above discussion of transshipment and fishcrime. It was highlighted that in some cases, it's not only fisheries rules that are broken but other violations can also be found such as document forgery, smuggling, drugs and human trafficking.

Inter-agency cooperation is vital not only because the fines in most of West Africa countries are often too low to deter illegal activities but also because the lack of collaboration between agencies does not give any chance to officers to conduct thorough inspections, and inspections are often limited only on fisheries violations. Other agencies often have the mandate and role to investigate other crimes that are taking place on board fishing vessels.

Presentation 4: National working group

To ensure compliance in fisheries sector, inter agency cooperation is a crucial element and most importantly helps address wider crimes taking place in the fisheries sector. The objective of the project and the WATF National Working Groups is not to create a new structure or be a replacement of an existing one, but rather has the aim to build on existing structures and processes in order to enhance collaboration and cooperation between various agencies with a role in fisheries enforcement.

Discussions: Operators know that Government agencies don't really communicate enough so they take advantage of that. Only connected agencies working together can crack fishcrime. In Liberia, the framework for cooperation between agencies is existing but not necessary need to be limited to the one established.

Since cooperation is meant to fill skills gaps, an open discussion helped to gather agencies that are supposed to be part of the National Working Group. An assessment has been made and all participants agreed that the following should be part of the NWG active on Basecamp:

- The Bureau of National Fisheries (BNF)
- Liberia Coast Guards (LCG)
- National Port Authority (NPA)

While the following groups should be part of the wider NWG and engaged on particular cases when it is relevant:

- National Police Interpol NCB
- Liberia Maritime Authority
- Bureau of Immigration and Naturalisation
- Ministry of Justice

It has been suggested that the focal point of the NWG for each agency should be tied to a position not to a person to ensure sustainability of the work.

Presentation 5: Review and discussion of MCS challenges of the Tuna fishery in Liberia

The current state of play in Liberia tuna fishery is that a Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement has recently been signed with the European Union allowing EU vessels to have access to fishing opportunities for tuna only in Liberian EEZ. Liberia is a member of ICCAT; there is only one Liberian longline which is currently licensed, no tuna is landed in Liberia. The fisheries operations are conducted by long liners, purse seiners, pole and lines, FADs, support vessels reefers and mini reefers. A description of the different fishing vessels, their gears and the advantages and disadvantages of every types of fishing methods have been presented.

Discussions: The BNF outlined the challenges they faced controlling the tuna fishery, with particular emphasis on the fact that this was the first time that the Fisheries Monitoring Centre would be tracking tuna vessels, and they were in need of training in order to be able to analyse the tracks. Further challenges included that the vessels would not be landing fish in Liberia, and so a partnership with Cote d'Ivoire was in development to conduct inspections. It was also noted that the vessels would not be carrying Liberian observers, making the BNF reliant on ICCAT observers.

Presentation 6: Liberian reefer (refrigerated cargo vessel) operations

Mr Duncan Copeland in his presentation on reefers broke the presentation into two sections: foreign flagged reefers operating in Liberian waters, and Liberian flagged reefers operating in Distant waters. Both operations presented serious MCS challenges to Liberia.

Foreign flagged reefers operating in Liberian waters were likely doing so in order to tranship illegally. This often takes place in border regions, such as with Sierra Leone, and vessels demonstrate active turning off of AIS in many cases. Occasionally reefers then come into Monrovia, but generally they then go onto other ports, requiring close cooperation. It was noted that Liberia was not alone in this challenge. Reefers were involved in transshipping both inshore species and tuna; for the latter although ICCAT has banned all transshipment at sea with exception of some longliners, transshipments at sea continue to be a big challenge in West Africa

Currently very few reefers carry VMS, but are required to carry and broadcast on AIS, however the challenge with them as a MCS risk comes by the fact that they bring fish from a wide number of origins into the region, which makes it hard to monitor and control. While reefers often use Flag of Convenience, they transport fish only but in some other cases they may transport goods, creating difficulty to identify when they are fishing Vessels. In Liberia regulations, the definition of 'Fishing vessel' includes reefers.

Reefers carrying the Liberian flag but operating in distant waters provided a very separate challenge. The Liberia Maritime Authority through LISCAR has recently signed Liberia up to many RFMOs as a cooperating member to take part in transshipment programmes, even though it is the BNF who has the responsibility for monitoring and controlling these vessels. Liberian reefers were now engaged in transshipment throughout the world, and none of them were being monitored by the FMC. Considering the recent yellow and red cards issued by the EU, this placed Liberia in a dangerous position for being assessed as a non-compliant country by the international community.

The issue of mini reefers was also presented, noting that this was a relatively new phenomena and that they were often converted longliners.

Discussions: It was noted by fisheries inspectors that while there's a procedure in place whereby every vessel coming at the port has to be inspected by a joint agency team, fisheries inspectors are not part of the team that inspects reefers. The main challenge is that sometimes even without authorization, vessels offload their fish and the timeframe is too short to allow a thorough inspection and verification of all documents, which may be leading to some illegal transshipments to not be identified.

It was noted by participants that it was a pity that the relevant personnel from the Liberia Maritime Authority had not attended the workshop, as the current lack of cooperation between the BNF and LMA was contributing to the current situation whereby reefers were being flagged without input from the BNF, and then were operating without being monitored by fisheries. Considering that if a reefer was identified as IUU fishing anywhere in the world, it would be the BNF, and not the LMA, that is the responsible authority. It was requested and agreed that the technical team would provide some technical support for the BNF to engage the LMA at the Ministerial level to address this problem.

2.2. Recommendations

The following recommendations were made at the end of the session:

- Provide technical training on vessel track analysis for tuna vessels
- Provide assistance to build stronger cooperation between the BNF and LMA on the control of reefers
- To conduct further training workshops of longer duration 3-5 days
- To support the National Working Group to greater, operationalise the existing inter-agency cooperation MoU that exists in Liberia
- Provide basic guidelines on expanding collaboration between agencies

3. Closing remarks

Mr Glasgow Togba and Mr Duncan Copeland thanked everyone for their active participation to the workshop and declared the session closed.

Appendix 1: List of participants

Fisheries intelligence and MCS support in West Africa

WEST AFRICA TASK FORCE NATIONAL WORKSHOP

MONROVIA, LIBERIA 21st JULY 2016

Registration form, 21st JULY 2016

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Appendix 2: Agenda

<p>West Africa Task Force</p> <p>National Working Group Engagement and Training Programme</p> <p>LIBERIA</p> <p>PROGRAMME AND TIMETABLE</p>

21 July 2016		
Participants: Inter-agency National Working Group		
Time	Activity	Presenter / Facilitator
09 : 00	Welcome remarks	BNF
09 : 15	- Introductions - Overview of Programme Agenda	Participants TMT
09 : 30	Overview and discussion of West Africa Task Force and 'Fisheries Intelligence and MCS Support' project objectives and activities	Duncan Copeland
10 :00	Coffee and tea Break	
10 :15	Fisheries Intelligence and Analysis - What is it and why important - Exercise: what are the high risk fisheries in Liberia, and why? - What is happening at the regional and national level? - Basecamp	Duncan Copeland and Viviane Koutob
11 :30	Task Force National Working Groups - Why National Working Groups? - Mapping out inter-agency cooperation in Liberia - Where is inter-agency cooperation most crucial? What agencies are represented in the National Working Group, and why are these the key agencies - What is needed to implement? - Who are the front-line agencies? Who should be on Basecamp?	Duncan Copeland
13 :00	Lunch	

13 :45	Review and discussion of MCS challenges in light of opening of the tuna fishery. Review of current capacity, and identification of gaps.	Duncan Copeland and all participants
14 :45	Review and discussion of MCS challenges for reefer controls. Review of current capacity, and identification of areas for inter-agency cooperation.	Duncan Copeland and all participants
16 :00	Summary and thanks	
16 :05	Coffee and tea Break, end of workshop for majority of participants	
16 :20	Basecamp Training for identified NWG representatives	
17 :30	End of the day	