



West Africa Task Force
Working together to stop illegal fishing



WEST AFRICA TASK FORCE

COOPERATION. COLLABORATION.
COMMUNICATION.



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 STOP THE TRADE IN ILLEGALLY CAUGHT FISH.

The Task Force is facilitated by the FCWC Secretariat and supported by a Technical Team that includes Trygg Mat Tracking (TMT), Stop Illegal Fishing and NFDS with funding from Norad. By actively cooperating, by sharing information and by facilitating national interagency working groups the West Africa Task Force is working together to stop illegal fishing.

The West Africa Task Force: Cooperation. Collaboration. Communication. has been produced by Stop Illegal Fishing, Trygg Mat Tracking, the FCWC Secretariat and NFDS.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS	4	WHAT DOES THE WATF DO?	32
FOREWORD	5	INCONSISTENT INFORMATION TRIGGERS INVESTIGATION OF THE BLUE GATE	32
WHAT’S HAPPENING, AND WHY?	6	DUE DILIGENCE IDENTIFIES UNFLAGGED VESSEL: THE SYLVALINE JONAH	33
WHAT’S HAPPENING IN THE FCWC REGION?	8	HIJACKED VESSEL JU YUAN 1 CAUGHT ILLEGALLY TARGETTING TUNA	34
WHAT ARE THE MAIN ISSUES AND CHALLENGES?	12	TRAINING EXERCISE IDENTIFIES IUU-LISTED VESSEL	35
WHY IS TRANSHIPMENT AN ISSUE?	14	LIBERIA DENIES FLAG TO HIGH RISK VESSEL: THE NEW BAI I NO. 168	36
WHY ARE REEFERS AN ISSUE?	16	TAIWAN ACTS AGAINST UNLICENSED FISHING IN LIBERIAN EEZ BY THE YEUN HORNG NO. 2	37
WHAT IS THE WEST AFRICA TASK FORCE?	18	TASK FORCES COOPERATE AGAINST ROGUE FLAGGING AGENT	38
HOW DOES THE WEST AFRICA TASK FORCE WORK?	19	NIGERIA TAKES THE LEAD ON IMO NUMBERS	39
COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION	22	INTERAGENCY INSPECTION INITIATED	40
COMMUNICATION	24	FRAUDULENT FLAG CLAIMS IDENTIFIED	41
CAPACITY BUILDING	26	TRANSHIPMENT SUSPECTED, REEFER INSPECTED	42
WHAT RESULTS?	30	WHAT NEXT?	43



All photographs copyright Stop Illegal Fishing, unless otherwise indicated. The images in this publication appear for the purposes of illustrating fishing and related operations only and are not intended to convey or imply, directly or indirectly, that any illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities had taken place or were otherwise associated with this image. All AIS data has been supplied by exactEarth. This publication should be cited as Stop Illegal Fishing, Trygg Mat Tracking, FCWC Secretariat and NFDS (2017) The West Africa Task Force: Cooperation. Collaboration. Communication. Gaborone, Botswana.

ACRONYMS

AfDB	African Development Bank
AIS	Automatic identification system
CAMFA	Conference of African Ministers of Fisheries and Aquaculture
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EEZ	Exclusive economic zone
EU	European Union
FAD	Fish aggregating device
FDF	Federal Department of Fisheries, Nigeria
FCWC	Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea
GRT	Gross registered tonnage
IATTC	Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission
ICCAT	International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas
IGO	Intergovernmental organisation
IMB	International Maritime Bureau
IMO	International Maritime Organization
IUU	Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing
MCS	Monitoring, control and surveillance
NFDS	Nordenfjeldske Development Services
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NORAD	Norwegian Development Agency
NWG	National working group
REC	Regional economic community
RFB	Regional fisheries body
RFMO	Regional fisheries management organisation
SIF	Stop Illegal Fishing
SRFC	Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission
t	tonnes
TF	Task Force
TT	Technical Team
TMT	Trygg Mat Tracking
TOR	Terms of Reference
VMS	Vessel monitoring system
WATF	West Africa Task Force



AS THE FCWC CELEBRATES ITS 10TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2017 WE CAN LOOK BACK WITH PRIDE AT OUR ACHIEVEMENTS.

FOREWORD

The West Africa Task Force (WATF) is convened by the Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea (FCWC) and is made up of the six FCWC members, Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Togo. It has been created with the support of the ‘Fisheries intelligence and monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) support in West Africa’ initiative generously supported by Norad. Together the Task Force is focused on stopping illegal fishing activities and stopping trade in illegally caught fish within our region.

Although there is no definitive data on the extent of illegal fishing we know that illegal operators particularly target the waters of West Africa, and a range of estimates suggest that 40-60% of fish caught in our region are caught illegally. These are amongst the highest levels of illegal fishing globally and the impact this has on lost income, lost opportunities and damage to livelihoods is immense. This has to stop, and the WATF is providing an effective means of intensifying our efforts to do this.

The WATF has now been active for three years, and in this time significant progress has been made including contributing significantly to the implementation of the FCWC Regional Plan of Action to combat illegal fishing adopted in 2009. We have found an effective means to ensure open communication, to overcome language barriers and to build national interagency collaboration. We now operate completely in the two official languages of the region (English and French). Administrative delays have been addressed between national and regional institutions, through real-time communications, and identified focal points and contacts. Openness is being achieved through the sharing of information, such as vessel licence lists, and this contributes to directed analysis of vessel activity that in turn better identifies high-risk vessels for further investigation.

The strong links that have been developed and are now operating within countries, throughout the region and with our international partners, are also yielding results. We are looking forward to the next phase of development as we build on our successes and work hard to overcome the challenges that have been identified by our work so far.

As the FCWC celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2017 we can look back with pride at our achievements. Our mission has been to increase cooperation between our members and a key goal has been to strengthen our response to illegal fishing. We have made real progress in these ambitions, and we are demonstrating to the world that through good communication, cooperation and collaboration, combined with capacity building we can achieve change.

We look forward to working with our partners for the continued success of the FCWC and the WATF!

Seraphin Dedi Nadjé

Seraphin Dedi Nadjé
Secretary General of the FCWC

WHAT’S HAPPENING, AND WHY?

The FCWC region, although with local differences, generally has:

- Important mixed artisanal and small-scale fisheries mainly providing fish for local consumption;
- Demersal shrimp and finfish fisheries targeted by industrial trawlers for a combination of local consumption and export; and
- Off-shore industrial large pelagic or tuna fisheries targeted by purse seine and pole-and-line vessels that is mainly for export but also providing some fish for the local markets.

The region is also a major hub for importing and transiting fish that has originated from other regions such as broader West Africa, China, Asia and Europe. Some of this fish is destined for local consumption, some for processing and a large amount is simply transferred from fishing vessels or reefers to containers for onward transport to global destinations.

The WATF focuses attention on building compliance with international, regional and national rules and regulations applied to the industrial fisheries sectors of the region. Attention is paid not only to ensuring compliance in the catching sector, but also working towards legitimacy in the flagging and licensing of fishing vessels, and to ensuring that only legal fish is transferred, off-loaded and processed in ports and permitted to enter the value chain and arrive at the market.



DEMERSAL SHRIMP AND FINFISH FISHERIES

The demersal fisheries are targeted mainly by small-scale fishers in Togo, Benin and Liberia, with limited industrial activity. Togo and Benin have very short coastlines and consequently have not developed industrial fisheries. Liberia historically had industrial trawlers fishing on their narrow continental shelf, but with the introduction of a six-mile inshore exclusion zone, reserved for small-scale fishers, there is currently limited authorised industrial trawling, although the anticipated change to a narrower, three-mile inshore exclusion zone may see an influx of industrial trawlers in the near future.

Ghana has a large locally flagged fleet of around 90 trawlers, between 20 and 45 meters long and 100 to 300 GRT, many with links to China. The fish are landed either in Tema or Takoradi in Ghana or in Côte d'Ivoire and destined for local consumption.

Côte d'Ivoire has a local trawler fleet that is only authorised to fish in national waters and consists of 28 trawlers of 20 to 40 meters long, many with links to China. Around 30 of the Ghanaian trawlers and three of the Nigerian trawlers are authorised by Côte d'Ivoire to fish in their waters.

Nigeria has a trawler fleet of around 150 vessels targeting shrimp and finfish. These vessels are smaller in size than the Ghanaian fleet measuring an average of 25 meters long and being between 100 to 150 GRT. The catch is landed in the ports of Nigeria (Lagos, Warri, Port Harcourt and Calabar) and consumed locally, with the shrimp catch entering the export market.

OFF-SHORE INDUSTRIAL LARGE PELAGIC OR TUNA FISHERIES

The large pelagic fishery includes the tropical tuna species of albacore, bigeye, skipjack and yellowfin and other oceanic species like swordfish, marlin and shark. The fish migrate through the Atlantic Ocean, passing annually into the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of the more western FCWC countries, usually during the third quarter of the year. The fishery is important to the region both due to the licensing of fishing vessels to fish within the EEZs and due to the imports and processing of fish within the two ports of Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire and Tema, Ghana.

The tuna fleet operating in the EEZs of the WATF countries consists of around 50 purse seine vessels, averaging 75 meters long and ranging from 500 to 2 800 GRT. About 20 of these vessels fly the flags of Spain or France, around 12 are Ghanaian flagged with links to Asian owners. The remainder fly a range of flags, some being flags of convenience, including Belize, Cape Verde, Curacao, El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama and Senegal, often with links to European owners. The European Union (EU) fleet is licensed to fish within the EEZs of Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, although fewer Spanish vessels tend to seek licences in Ghana. The Ghanaian fleet is licensed to fish in their home waters, in Côte d'Ivoire, and three vessels are licensed to fish in Benin. The remainder of the purse seine fleet are currently licensed to fish in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. 12 supply vessels that service the purse seine fleet are authorised to operate in Liberia, one French, six Panamanian and five Spanish.

In addition to the purse seine fleet around 12 Ghanaian pole-and-line fishing vessels operate in Ghana, Benin and Côte d'Ivoire. One longline vessel occasionally operates in Liberia and another in Côte d'Ivoire.

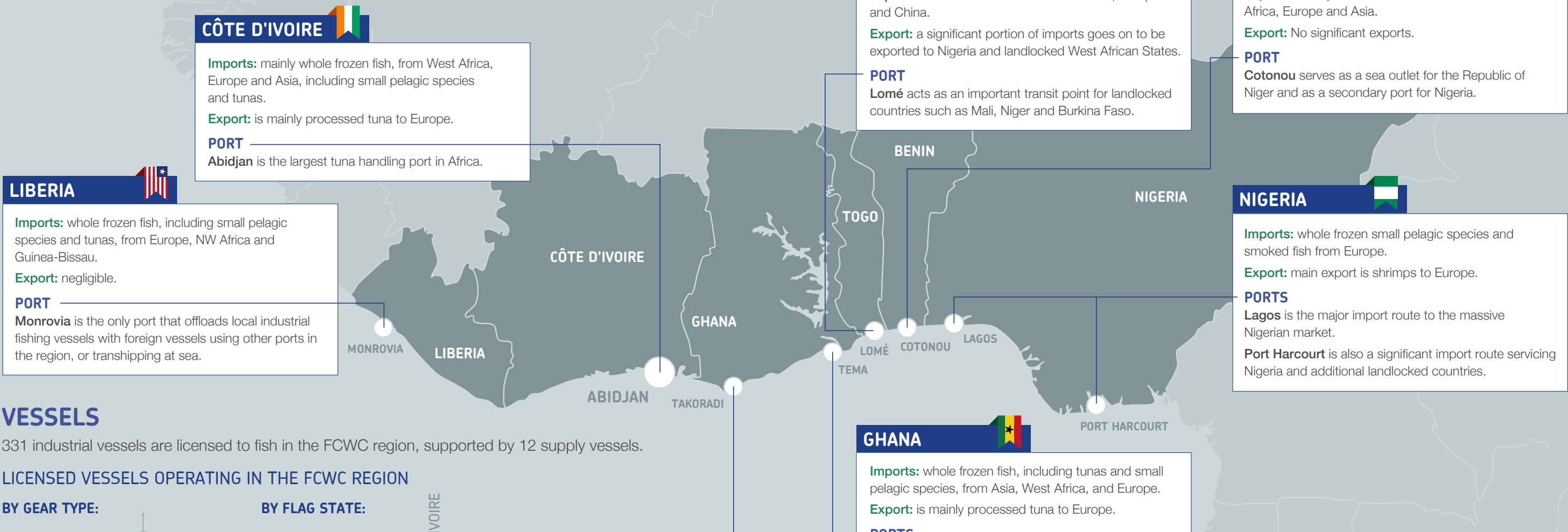


The main post-harvest activities in the FCWC region include: the processing of tuna in either Abidjan or Tema destined for consumption in other regions such as Europe and Asia; the transport of whole frozen tuna either in reefers or containers to other countries for processing; and the supply of tuna for local consumption, generally involving by-catch being preserved on board to be sold during vessel port stopovers.

Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire is the main tuna port in the region for landing, transshipment and provisioning with 130 000 t of tuna transiting through Abidjan each year. The port has three processing factories (handling 50 000 t per year) and large cold storage facilities that assist in maintaining year-round flow of fish to the factories. They also facilitate the movement of fish from fishing or reefer vessels to containers for direct transshipment (55 000 t per year) for processing in Europe or Asia. The remainder (25 000 t) is used for local consumption. Tema, Ghana cans 58 000 t of tuna annually, destined mainly for Europe, in one main and one smaller processing plant. Containerised tuna is also sent to Europe and Côte d'Ivoire for processing, while by-catch is sold on the local market.

12 supply vessels that service the purse seine fleet are authorised to operate in Liberia, one French, six Panamanian and five Spanish

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE FCWC REGION?



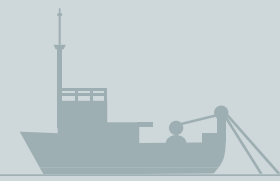
VESSELS

331 industrial vessels are licensed to fish in the FCWC region, supported by 12 supply vessels.

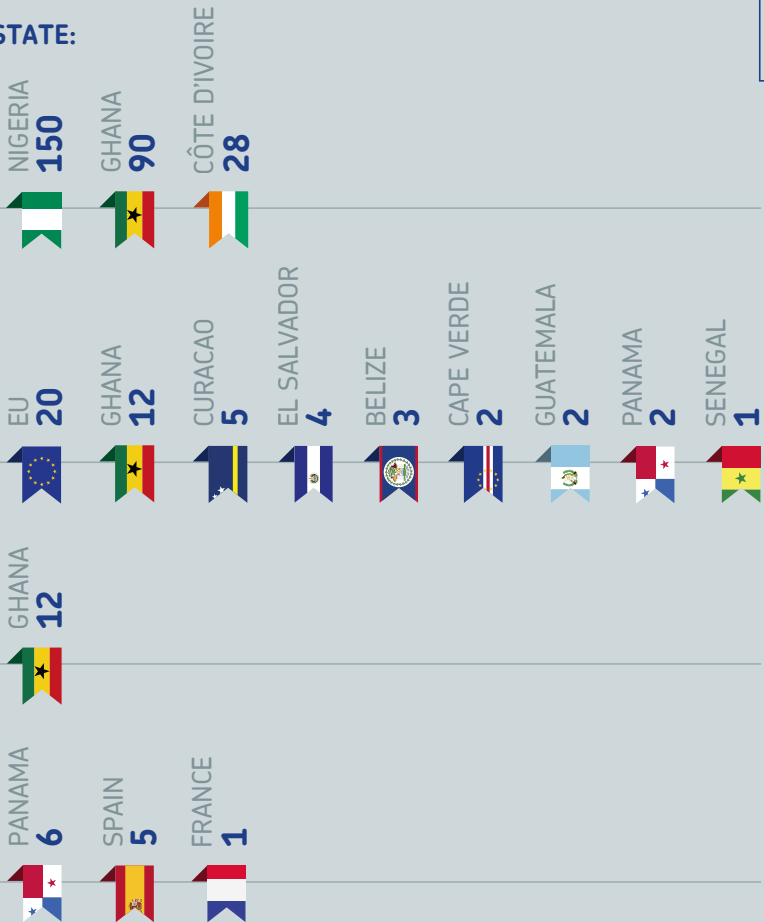
LICENSED VESSELS OPERATING IN THE FCWC REGION

BY GEAR TYPE:

TRAWLERS
268



BY FLAG STATE:

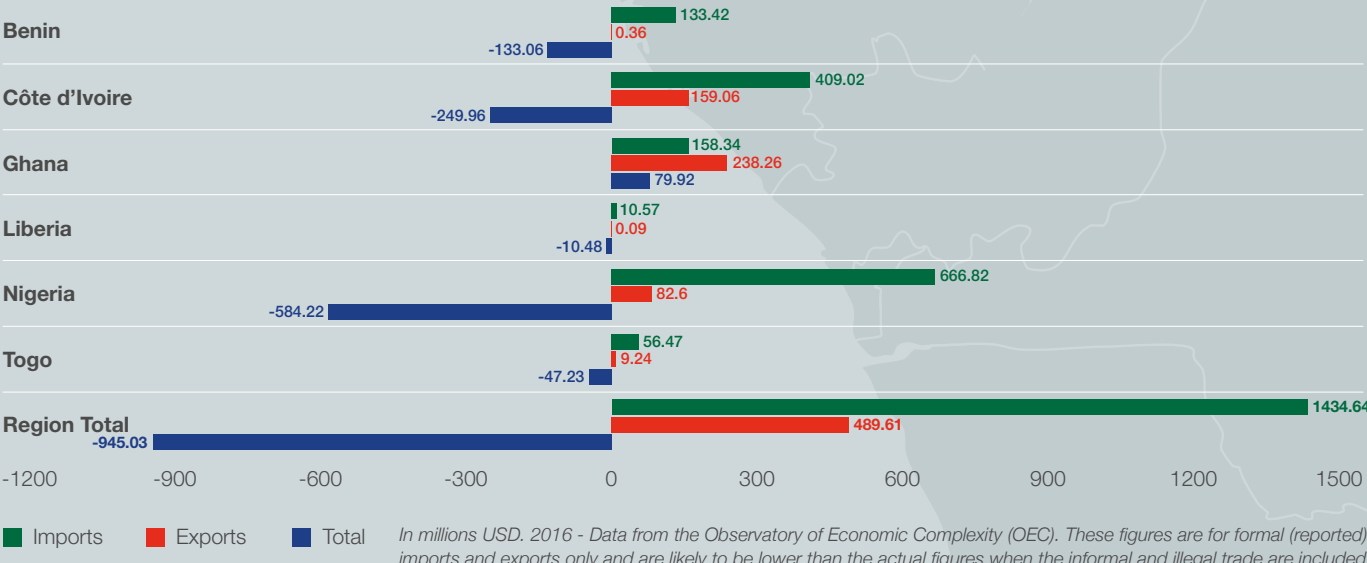


GHANA

Imports: whole frozen fish, including tunas and small pelagic species, from Asia, West Africa, and Europe.

Export: is mainly processed tuna to Europe.

PORTS
Tema is an important port for the EU fleet.
Takoradi the main export port for Ghana, also services trade for landlocked countries such as Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger.



TUNA PROCESSING IN THE FCWC REGION

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

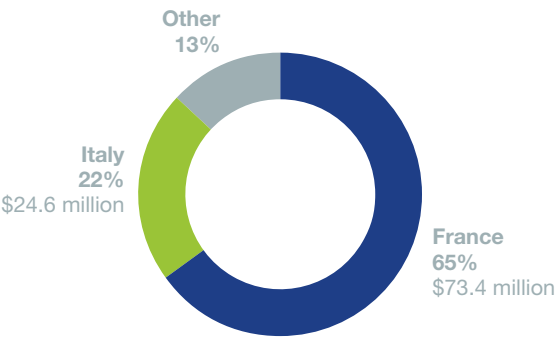
Côte d'Ivoire has three major processing plants with a combined processing capacity of 130 000 metric tons of raw frozen tuna annually.¹

EU vessels are the main source of supply for the three canneries (around 70 %).²

Approximately 3 000 shipping containers of processed tuna leave Abidjan annually.³

In Abidjan, approximately 30 000 jobs stem from the tuna industry.⁴

According to the OEC: 2015 65% of the country's prepared/preserved tuna/skipjack/bonito exports, valued at USD 73.4 million, went to France. 22% went to Italy, valued at USD 24.6 million. In total 99% of these exports when to Europe, valued at USD 112 million of the total USD 114 million.⁵



¹ http://www.africantunaconference.com/en/tourist_information.html#port

² DG MARE 2011/01/Lot 3 – SC2, ix. https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/sites/fisheries/files/docs/body/cote_ivoire_2012_summary_en.pdf

³ http://www.africantunaconference.com/en/tourist_information.html#port

⁴ DG MARE 2011/01/Lot 3 – SC2, ix. https://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/sites/fisheries/files/docs/body/cote_ivoire_2012_summary_en.pdf

⁵ http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/export/civ/show/160414/2015/

⁶ B Asiedu, P Failler, Y Beyens The performance of tuna processing fishery sector to sustainable fish trade and food security in Ghana, 2015. http://uenr.edu.gh/jenrm/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/002_Berchie.pdf

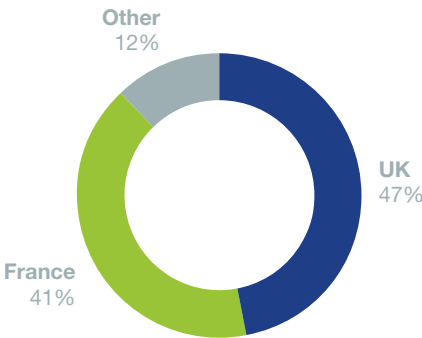
⁷ http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/export/gha/show/160414/2015/

GHANA

There are a total of 6 500 people employed in the tuna fish chain.

A total of 58 000 tonnes of tuna is canned annually.⁶

According to the OEC: 2015 99.9% of the country's prepared/preserved tuna/skipjack/bonito exports, valued at USD 187 million, went to Europe. The UK received 47% of all exports, while France received 41%.⁷

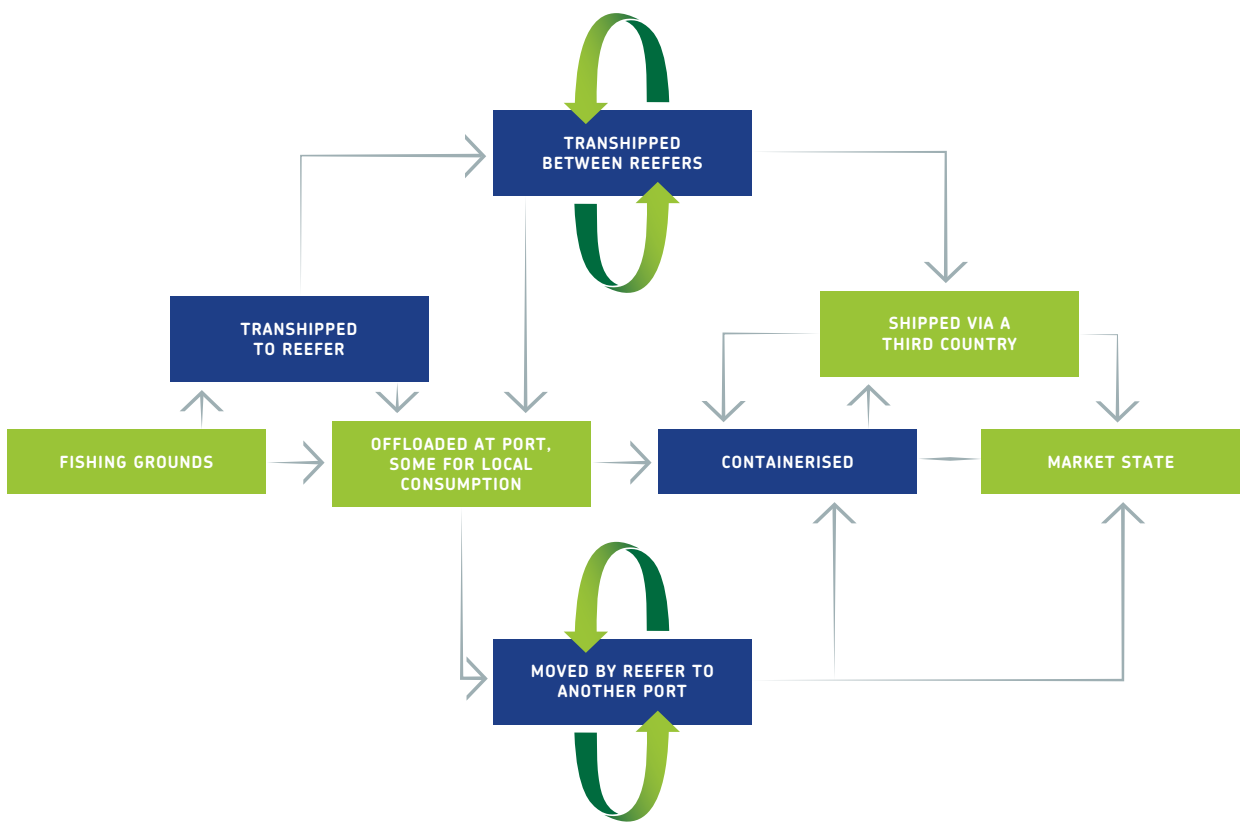


WHAT ARE THE MAIN ISSUES AND CHALLENGES?

THE VALUE CHAIN

The FCWC region is a significant importer, exporter and processor of fish. Fish landed in ports in the region may have been caught outside the region, may be exported to a third country, or fish caught in the region may be processed elsewhere before being transported to yet another country for final sale. Vessel activity and transport linked to these supply chains are inter-twined, meaning that a range of vessel types and operators are involved. Fishing vessels involved in catching may also act as mini-reefers transporting fish to port or to larger reefers.

Reefer activity in the region is significant, and transshipment at sea, despite being illegal does occur, facilitating the laundering of illegally caught fish into the supply chain. Added to this, significant exports and imports are transported in containers making inspection and tracking challenging as container carriers are not subject to inspection by fisheries authorities. Once fish has entered a container, it may have changed hands multiple times and tracing its true origins, and proving illegality, may be near impossible.



- Processing may occur at the highlighted points in the chain
- ↻ Steps with these arrows may be repeated multiple times
- > All variants of this arrow represent an opportunity to launder illegally caught fish into the legal supply chain

THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The management of the fisheries within the FCWC region falls within various jurisdictional levels and geographical scales, creating a complex framework for management. This includes: international conventions (UN agreements and guidelines); oceanic conventions (the International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas – ICCAT); regional cooperation (FCWC); and national laws and regulations. Operators take advantage of gaps in the law and loopholes in regulations, or simply use the complexities to their advantage – assuming jurisdictional confusion, or a lack of capacity or will prevent sanctions from being applied.

THE REGIONAL OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

The Gulf of Guinea is a piracy hotspot, with 2016 bringing a significant rise in violence at sea, the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) recorded 55 attacks or attempted attacks in West and Central Africa, including 36 for Nigeria. Legitimate piracy concerns are also providing cover for operators wanting to hide illegal fishing activity. Some fishing vessels may 'go dark' on AIS to avoid detection, ostensibly by pirates but also by authorities.

GLOBAL INFLUENCES

The most pressing global issue that impacts on fishing is the growing world population and the consequent increase in the demand for fish. This demand, especially for cheap protein, can encourage operators to cut costs by acting illegally.

A global overcapacity of fishing effort and decline in fish stocks encourages fishing vessels to relocate and increase fishing pressure in distant waters, where fish are more abundant, such as the FCWC region. Owners may also re-flag their vessels to foreign States due to limitations on capacity in their homelands and to benefit from less strict controls and oversight in other countries, or to comply with joint venture requirements. In the FCWC region, vessel owners from countries such as China and Thailand have re-flagged their fishing vessels to countries of the region, such as Nigeria or Ghana.

The application of rules of origin within different trade agreements can have significant impact on market access for fish and fish products. This may influence the flag that a vessel owner chooses to fly, where a vessel fishes and where the catch is landed, it may also encourage false reporting of these to facilitate market access.

The global focus on developing thriving blue economies that increase the benefits from the oceans, particularly for coastal States, is in its infancy in the FCWC region. However, if the region is to adopt this approach, securing a compliant fisheries sector and associated value chain will be a vital element in a successful blue economy.



The most pressing global issue that impacts on fishing is the growing world population and the consequent increase in the demand for fish



WHY IS TRANSHIPMENT AN ISSUE?

Transshipment at sea represents a major loophole in control systems that can facilitate illegal fishing and laundering of illegally caught fish. Unobserved transshipment enables vessels to breach their licence and authorisation conditions, fish without a licence, catch restricted species, under-report catches and avoid paying taxes. It also enables vessels to stay at sea for long periods of time, which is one of several factors linked to increased risk of labour abuse and human trafficking.

Transshipment at sea is banned in the EEZs of all WATF members; however there are significant challenges to enforcing these bans and transshipment is believed to be a major issue in the region. The WATF has therefore been monitoring reefer movements and has identified many vessels on AIS showing movement patterns that deviate from the expected norm of direct transit from port to port. For example, between January and July 2016 WATF AIS monitoring revealed more than 70 incidents of reefer vessels deviating from the expected operating pattern in the EEZs of Task Force countries. It is not possible to inspect every vessel that displays indications of suspicious behaviour, and it is not known whether these incidents indicate transshipment at sea or if there were other explanations.

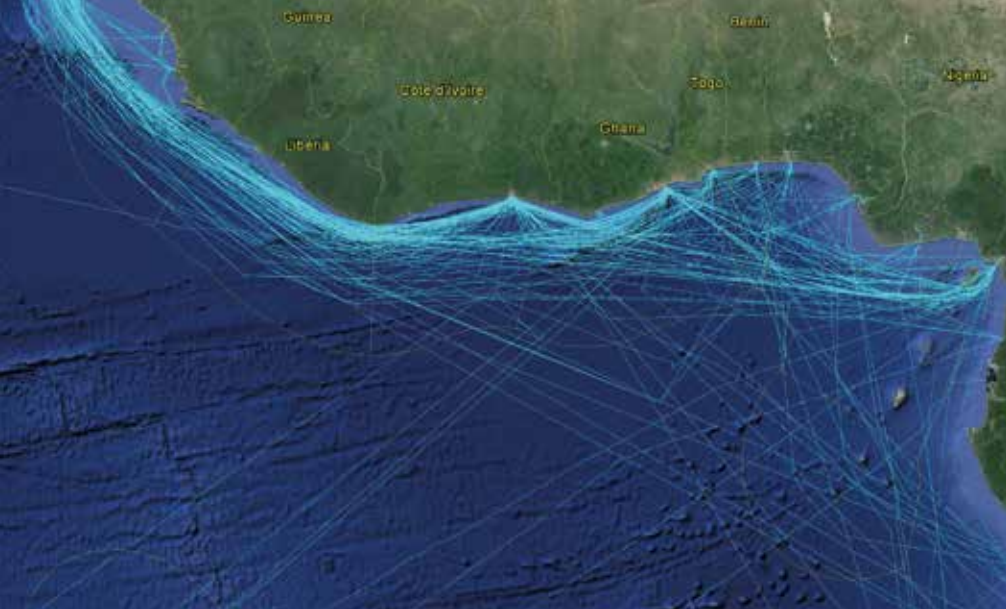
The three examples below highlight the difficulties faced by enforcement officials to identify, inspect, secure evidence and take action when potential illegal transshipment is suspected.

February 2016: the GREEN FREEZER a reefer flagged to the Bahamas departed Takoradi, Ghana and proceeded to operate for eight days in waters on the edge of the continental shelf, in the Ghanaian EEZ. The vessel subsequently updated its destination on AIS from Takoradi to Abidjan, and proceeded to its new destination. En route to Abidjan the vessel diverted from its course whilst in the EEZ of Côte d'Ivoire and was observed to operate at a slow speed for a period of two hours.



September 2016: the HAI FENG 648 a reefer flagged to Panama was tracked on AIS diverting course and operating at a low speed of 0 – 1.5 knots in the EEZ of Liberia. The vessel disappeared from AIS upon entering the Côte d'Ivoire EEZ and reappeared a day later on track for Takoradi, Ghana, where it called in to port. The gap in AIS covered a period of 27 hours and the distance covered in this time indicated that the vessel had at some point operated slower than its last reported speed of 14.4 knots.

November 2016: the TAVR a reefer flagged to St Vincent and the Grenadines was seen on AIS to hold a position in the EEZ of Ghana for a period of approximately 11 hours – this could indicate that the vessel had engaged in transshipment with a 'dark' vessel. TAVR is a former fishing vessel converted to operate as a fish carrier that regularly travels between Tema, Ghana and Freetown, Sierra Leone. The Task Force was alerted and authorities in Sierra Leone were contacted and requested to inspect the vessel when it called in to port. Copies of vessel documentation obtained by inspectors in Sierra Leone revealed that the vessel had undergone bunkering at sea during the period of interest – this was confirmed by a bunker receipt and recorded in the vessel's logbook.



TRACKING IMAGERY
SHOWS THE ACTIVITY OF
46 REEFERS OPERATING
IN THE FCWC REGION
BETWEEN JANUARY AND
MAY 2016

WHY ARE REEFERS AN ISSUE?

High amounts of fish imports and exports in West Africa result in significant levels of refrigerated cargo or reefer traffic in the region with the most important ports for reefer activity being: Monrovia (Liberia), San Pedro and Abidjan (Côte d’Ivoire), Takoradi and Tema (Ghana), Lomé (Togo), Cotonou (Benin), Lagos, Warri and Port Harcourt (Nigeria).

- Reefers may operate in different ways in the region, for example they may:
- regularly transport tuna out of the region;
 - regularly transport tuna into the region;
 - regularly bring small pelagic fish into the region;
 - occasionally bring fish into or out of the region, but mostly they are located outside of the region; or
 - remain permanently in the region moving fish caught between the region’s ports.
- Reefer operations are planned to maximise cost effectiveness and minimise unproductive time. Vessels typically take the shortest route from port to port and operate at cruising speed, unless operational requirements dictate otherwise. Any deviation from this pattern or a break in transmissions on AIS may indicate that a reefer is:
- transshipping with a dark vessel (i.e. a fishing vessel that is not tracking on AIS);
 - bunkering (refueling) at sea;
 - waiting for a berth in port;
 - awaiting orders to proceed through a piracy high-risk zone;
 - undergoing repairs, or engine trouble; or
 - could be a sign of poor satellite coverage and limited AIS signal.

As AIS can only identify incidents of possible transshipment, and physical vessel inspection is required to confirm what activity has taken place, the need for cooperation between agencies within countries and across countries is essential to overcome illegal transshipment. For example, reefers often dock in a different port area to fishing vessels, where fisheries inspectors may not have easy access. Cooperation from port and customs officials is essential for fisheries inspectors to be able to even access reefers and inspection findings will often need to be verified with information on fish that has been loaded or offloaded, which may be held by port or customs authorities in the port State or in another country.

The WATF national working groups (NWGs), set up in each country and the communications portal of the Task Force have been essential tools in allowing the WATF to start to monitor, understand and identify risk areas related to the movements of reefers within the FCWC region.



WHAT TYPES OF REEFERS ARE OPERATING IN THE REGION?

	REEFERS	MINI-REEFERS
Description	Merchant marine cargo vessels built with refrigerated holds to carry perishable commodities that require temperature-controlled transportation.	Often converted former fishing vessels.
Average dimensions	Varies, typically 110 x 18 meters	Varies, typically 50 x 10 meters
Average gross tonnage	c. 3 500	Varies, but c. 500
IMO numbers?	Yes	Varies
Using AIS	While most are on AIS as required by IMO convention, reefers often turn off AIS with little flag State sanction.	Often not
Estimated number in FCWC region	More than 100.	Not known.
Flags of those operating	More than 20 flags – major flag States include Liberia, the Bahamas, Panama and St Kitts and Nevis.	As converted fishing vessels, mini-reefers generally use the same flags flown by the fishing vessels they are supporting.
Means of operation and challenges	<p>Reefers often do not call in to the section of port reserved for fishing vessels, which can present obstacles to access by fisheries inspectors.</p> <p>Imported fish is frequently seen as a customs, rather than fisheries, responsibility.</p> <p>Many reefers are flagged by States not otherwise engaged in the region’s fisheries and spend a considerable amount of time operating outside the region, including in international waters.</p> <p>While some reefers are dedicated fish carriers, many also carry other goods, which means that at times they meet the definition of a fisheries vessel (and therefore subject to fisheries controls) and other times not.</p>	<p>Mini-reefers are less likely to transmit on AIS and may not always be authorised or registered as carrier vessels, so their activities are hard to identify and monitor.</p> <p>Mini-reefers are sometimes registered as fishing vessels; if they are not then countries do not license them, and they are not on VMS. If they are then they may be licensed to catch fish, which represents a route for catch from unlicensed vessels to be laundered into the supply chain.</p> <p>Mini-reefers can be difficult to distinguish from active fishing vessels – the most basic conversion is when the gear is simply removed and the holds are used to store transshipped fish. Also, vessels can (often easily) be converted back to a fishing vessel, or can pretend to be a fishing vessel, making monitoring difficult.</p>
Cases	GREEN MUSIC and RANGIROA (see p. 42 and p.40). In both cases, cooperation led to vessel inspection by members of the Task Force and no illegal activities were detected.	NEW BAI I NO. 168 (see p.36). A former longliner that was converted to operate as a mini-reefer and engaged in unauthorised transshipment with longliners targeting tuna and sharks whilst operating out of the port of Dakar. This vessel was refused registration and licensing by Liberia.

WHAT IS THE WEST AFRICA TASK FORCE?

Fisheries enforcement officers are central in the fight against illegal fishing, ensuring that fish are caught, offloaded, transhipped and imported in a legal manner. To effectively tackle violations, illegalities and crime in the fisheries sector fisheries officers need to work alongside and in close cooperation with a range of agencies and organisations at the national, regional and international level.

The Task Force approach of cooperation and collaboration amongst neighbouring coastal States to fight illegal fishing is a proven model. The FISH-i Africa Task Force has been in operation in the Western Indian Ocean region since 2012 and provides a good example of how much can be achieved with effective information and intelligence sharing, combined with the will to challenge illegal practices.

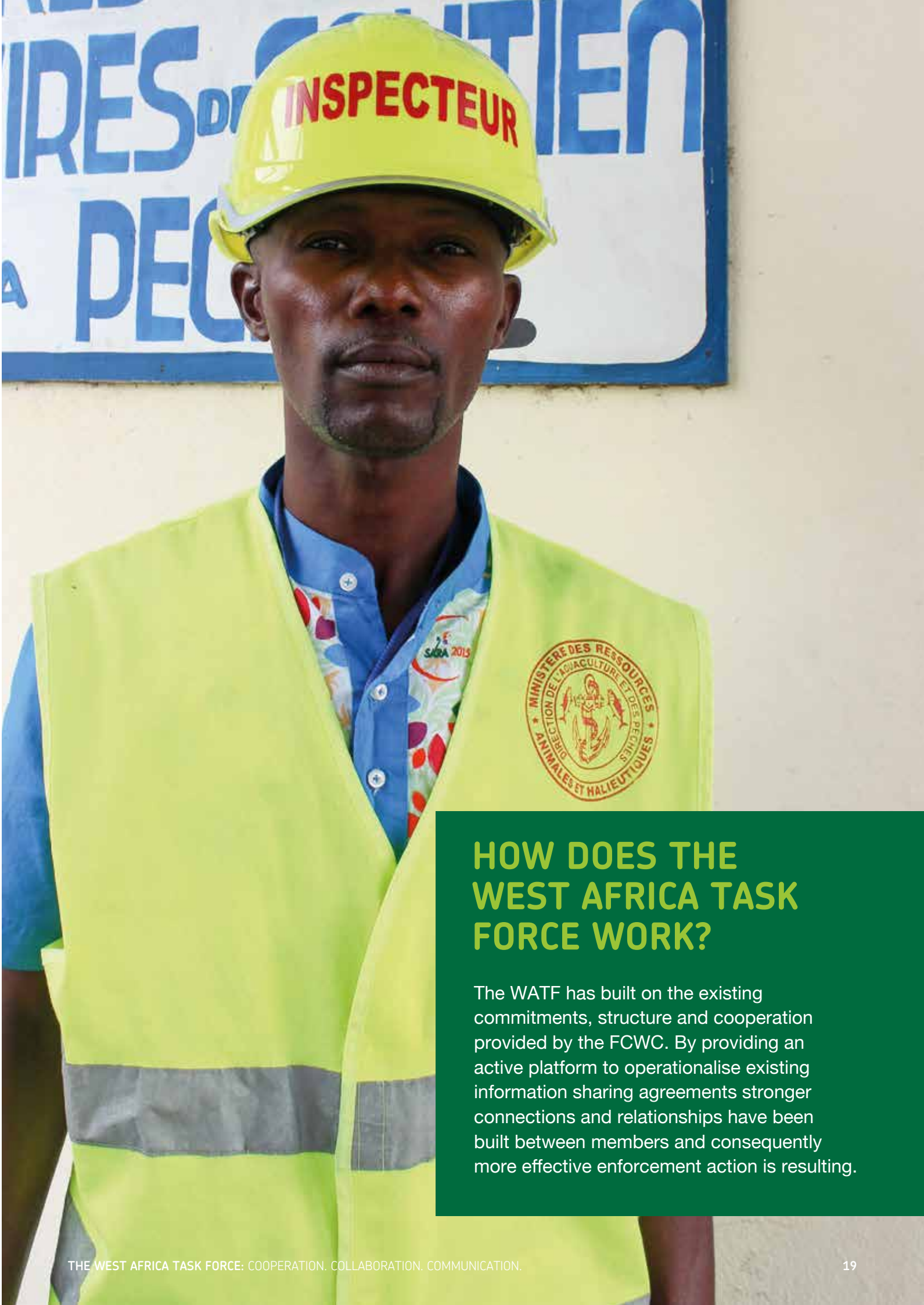
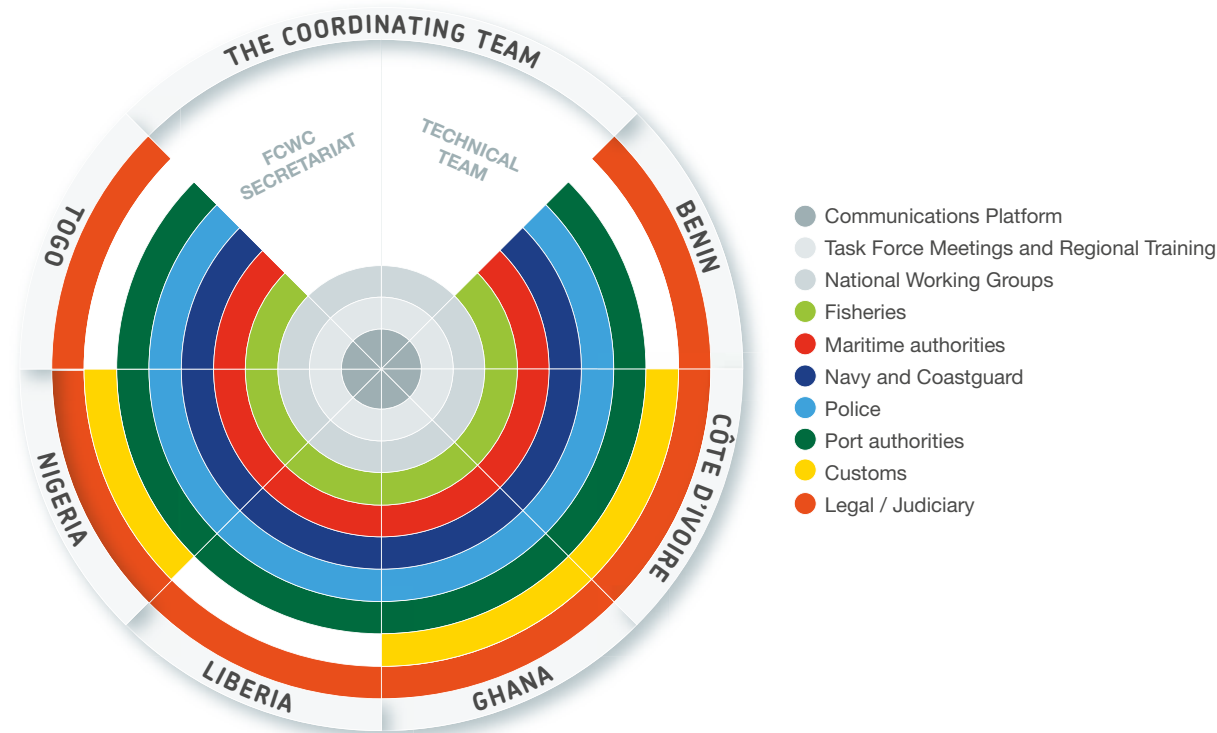
The WATF was established in 2015 as a subsidiary body of the FCWC by the Conference of Ministers of the six member States of the FCWC to focus efforts and to provide a platform for increasing cooperation as part of the implementation of the FCWC Regional Plan of Action to combat illegal fishing adopted in 2009.

The WATF has built on the core values of cooperation and collaboration and has focused on increasing communication and capacity within the FCWC region. The aim is to develop an active network focused on effectively increasing compliance in the industrial fisheries sector.

The WATF aims to overcome obstacles to inter-departmental, inter-agency and inter-country cooperation by:

- providing a shared communications platform;
- establishing NWGs involving all relevant agencies;
- holding regular Task Force meetings and regional trainings; and
- supporting all activity through the FCWC and the wider Technical Team.

Those involved in the National Working Groups vary by country and reflect the needs and issues of each member. In addition to those listed below, other participating agencies include Air Force, Immigration, Environment, Natural Resources, the Regional Maritime Security Centre, Prefecture Maritime, High Council of the Sea and Foreign Affairs.



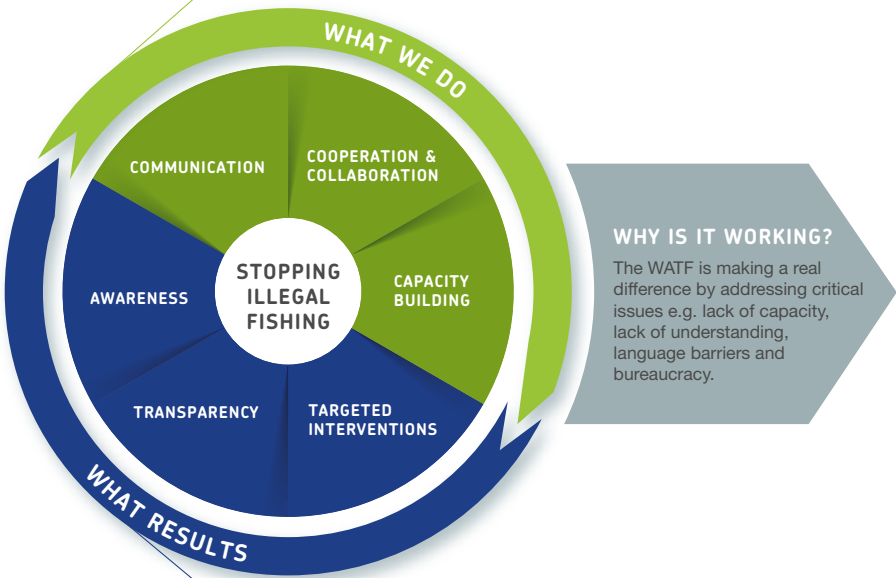
HOW DOES THE WEST AFRICA TASK FORCE WORK?

The WATF has built on the existing commitments, structure and cooperation provided by the FCWC. By providing an active platform to operationalise existing information sharing agreements stronger connections and relationships have been built between members and consequently more effective enforcement action is resulting.

HOW DOES THE WEST AFRICA TASK FORCE WORK?

WHAT WE DO

The WATF is focused on identifying illegal fishing operations, whether relating to the catching, transporting or trade in fish and fish products. By increasing expertise and knowledge, limited resources can be used more effectively for enforcement operations. Better communication, enhanced policies and practices all lead to improved compliance.



WHAT RESULTS

By working together, by sharing information and experiences strong relationships are formed that aid good communication and promote a collaborative response to common issues. Tolerance, trust and transparency take time to build, but the tangible benefits of these will be felt long term.

KEY ELEMENTS	ACTIVITIES AND BENEFITS		RESULTS	IMPACTS
Communication Knowing who to contact at the national and regional level to get timely information and assistance is crucial when dealing with flagging or licensing decisions, or when enforcement action is required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creating a common communications platform that includes TF members and NWG representatives with translation in English and French.• Sharing of intelligence and information, and requests for assistance and enforcement actions between TF members and NWGs.• Holding regular WATF meetings which involve members of the TF and NWGs and relevant international organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sharing of contact details amongst TF and NWG members.• Identifying flag State, port State and company contacts.• Alerts on high risk or IUU listed vessels, and active incidents and cases.	108 Unique communication threads on the communications platform, with 525 responses.	Improved enforcement and compliance: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Port inspections• Increased due diligence for flagging and licensing decisions• Vessel detentions and prosecutions• Requests for INTERPOL support• Requests for RFMO IUU listings• Increased applications for licences
Cooperation and Collaboration Working together as a Task Force and as NWGs provides a deeper understanding of the issues, and closes down opportunities for illegal operators to supply false information and avoid investigation for violations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regularly meeting as a TF provides a forum to exchange information, to get to know each other and a space for discussion.• Analysing and sharing of regional data and information.• Sharing of fishing licence information.• Looking at the bigger picture, regionally and globally, to increase understanding and coordinate and focus efforts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building links with regional and international organisations e.g. INTERPOL, SRFC to pool knowledge and achieve common objectives.• Bringing together relevant national agencies to build understanding, cooperation and effectiveness. This inter-agency cooperation strengthens fisheries MCS and enables other fisheries crimes to be handled.	6 Countries and 50 national agencies involved in the WATF through NWGs.	
Capacity Building Empowering fisheries inspectors and cooperating officials through increasing knowledge and expertise enables them to work professionally and effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training in-country and regionally through targeted workshops focusing on e.g. port inspections, photo analysis, chain of custody, AIS and VMS data.• Providing ongoing technical, legal and operational advice and support.• Developing technical papers in response to Task Force requests on e.g. transshipment, reefer activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintaining a 'toolbox' of training manuals, templates and resources available to WATF members.• Organising exchanges and interactions of experienced personnel between countries and at meetings.• Regularly circulating relevant press coverage as well as awareness material to highlight issues and challenges.	183 WATF members participated in training.	
KEY ELEMENTS	ACTIVITIES AND BENEFITS		RESULTS	IMPACTS
Awareness Illegal operations in the fisheries sector are complex and enforcement involves a range of agencies, often in different countries. All actors need to be aware of the severity of the issue and the role they can play in stopping illegal fishing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A new focus and growing awareness on impacts of illegal fishing and the existence of fisheries related crimes as a result of NWG formation.• Improved understanding of common issues and challenges between agencies and countries.• Knowledge of the potentially damaging impacts of flagging and licensing high risk vessels are better known.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Awareness of operational and capacity issues which can affect the ability to act, helps to build trust.• Awareness and understanding of commonalities and differences in national legal frameworks, management approaches and available capacity between countries.• Improved understanding of the need and ability of coastal States to engage with flag, port and market States.	Due diligence checks when flagging and licensing vessels.	Improved enforcement and compliance: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Port inspections• Increased due diligence for flagging and licensing decisions• Vessel detentions and prosecutions• Requests for INTERPOL support• Requests for RFMO IUU listings• Increased applications for licences
Transparency Sharing and making information available to all Task Force members reduces opportunities for illegal activities to be covered up. Openness about how illegal fishing is being tackled creates trust and highlights where system wide change needs to happen.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All WATF members have shared information on commercial vessels that are licensed to operate in their EEZs.• A shared communications platform allows for openness of information on investigations and enquiries.• Corruption is less likely when communication is conducted in an open forum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Better understanding of the regulatory environment that other TF members are operating under, helps understanding of what is and isn't possible when cooperation is needed.• All communications translated into English and French allows for communication between States and eliminates misunderstandings.• TF processes and results made available to the wider international community.	Information on 300+ licensed vessels has been shared by the WATF.	
Targeted interventions Making sure that limited resources are used wisely so they have the maximum impact both in catching illegal operators and deterring future offenders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High risk vessels for flagging or licensing have been identified.• Investigations and prosecutions of vessels and companies for fisheries violations.• Real time information allows for speedy responses to intelligence and information exchange.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Patterns of behaviour are analysed to identify potential infringements and illegalities.• Increased and strengthened port inspections.• A regional approach enables improved prioritisation.	26 Intelligence reports (INTREPS) prepared for potential high risk vessels.	

COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION

Illegal fishing is a complex, global problem that is being conducted through fishing vessels flagged, owned and operated by a multitude of countries. Operations and illegalities occur across jurisdictions and take advantage of weak governance by coastal States and an incoherent patchwork of rules, regulations and laws at the international level.

Stopping illegal fishing requires cooperation and collaboration at many levels:

NATIONALLY

With the cooperation of relevant agencies, to improve compliance and consequently promote sustainability, increase revenue and socio-economic benefits, the WATF has:

- Established NWGs to make sure that inter-agency cooperation can and does happen.
- Focused attention on common issues and problems.
- Looked for shared benefits and common goals.

REGIONALLY

To create a strong and effective network that can stop illegal fishing the WATF has:

- Established a communications platform to make regional information easily available.
- Created a regional viewpoint to identify common problems and common solutions.
- Encouraged open sharing of previously private information such as information on licensed vessels.
- Worked together and shared intelligence on vessels operating illegally.
- Agreed a TOR with common goals and targets.

IN WEST AFRICA

To deal with common problems, share information and close opportunities for illegal operators, the WATF has:

- Worked with the Sub-Regional Fisheries Commission (SRFC) member States through their MCS Unit.
- Provided alerts on high-risk vessels operating or present in West Africa.
- Verified information on licences, flagging and inspections.
- Requested assistance on active investigations.
- Invited each other to meetings to strengthen the cooperation.

INTERNATIONALLY

To ensure enforcement action is effective and that the global system can respond to local needs, the WATF has:

- Encouraged participation and engagement of international agencies and organisations within the WATF Technical Team and in Regional Training events.
- Shared their experiences within regional and global discussions and processes, including through processes of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union towards the development of the Pan African Fisheries Policy Framework and the Comprehensive African Fisheries Reform Strategy, in response to decisions of the Conference of African Ministers of Fisheries and Aquaculture (CAMFA).
- Strengthened links with organisations such as the FAO, INTERPOL and NOAA.
- Encouraged intelligence sharing as appropriate outside of the FCWC region.
- Facilitated links and communication with flag States.
- Shared information from other regions e.g. FISH-i Africa alerts on high risk vessels.



HOW IS IT WORKING?

- **50 agencies** are actively involved in the WATF through NWGs.
- **The WATF has initiated new cooperative relationships** by creating links and connections with organisations, agencies, neighbouring countries, flag and port States.



WHAT ARE THE TASK FORCE SAYING?

“By facilitating cooperation between agencies the WATF is helping to save time and resources.”
Lt/Col Bina Fofana, Fisheries, Côte d'Ivoire

“The NWG has strengthened interagency cooperation in dealing with IUU issues, we share information with the Navy and the two agencies cross-check information on vessels and their activities.”
Godfrey Baidoo-Tsibu, Fisheries, Ghana

“The WATF through NWGs has strengthened cooperation and collaboration between the national agencies involved in the monitoring of the fisheries activities and has helped to increase compliance at sea.”
Captain Kwafo, Navy, Ghana

“Prior to the establishment of the WATF there was almost no active cooperation happening in Togo, we have welcomed the cooperation built by the National Working Group and the Task Force more generally, it has allowed us to exchange information and understand the fisheries regulations and how they should be applied.”
Ayétou Adjoh-Komlan , Maritime Affairs, Togo

“The Directorate of Maritime Affairs is the mandated agency to register fishing vessels. Through the NWG, our new Fisheries Act and the Naval Code, registration of fishing vessels will now be done in collaboration with Fisheries Directorate.”
Ahoedo Kossi, Fisheries, Togo

“In January 2017, I received a message from the Directorate of Fisheries asking me to verify information on the port of destination on a vessel GRIPO that had called to port in Cotonou and was suspected of being a ‘risk vessel’. Prior to the NWG, the Directorate of Fisheries never called to request for such information.”
Hercile Akpamoli, Port Authority, Benin

COMMUNICATION

Open channels of communication and information exchange are at the heart of the WATF. Fast exchange of information and support are necessary when making decisions on port access, inspections or enforcement activity. Knowing who to contact and how to get hold of them is crucial in this process. Language barriers can prevent dialogue so the WATF provide full translation of all communications in French and English.

The WATF has developed communication at the national, regional and international level.

The shared WATF Communications Platform provides a confidential means to:

- Share information such as licence lists, port inspections, publications or media reports.
- Discuss ongoing investigations and share intelligence.
- Request information or assistance from other TF members or the Technical Team.
- Plan Task Force activities, such as workshops and meetings.
- Create a searchable archive of investigations and information.

Regular meetings of the Task Force and National Working Groups provide opportunity to:

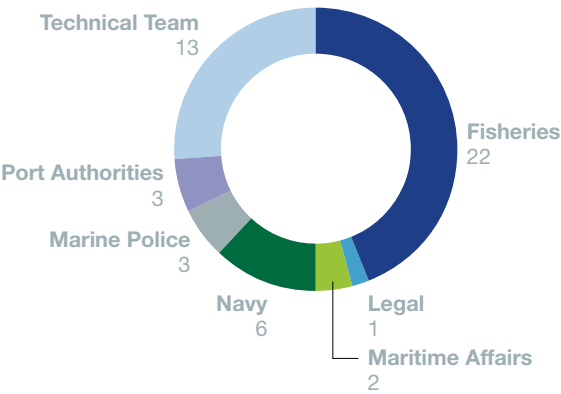
- Get to know each other and establish relationships.
- Build trust and understanding.
- Create direct contact points between agencies and countries within the region.
- Connect with international experts.

Facilitation of communication internationally has enabled the:

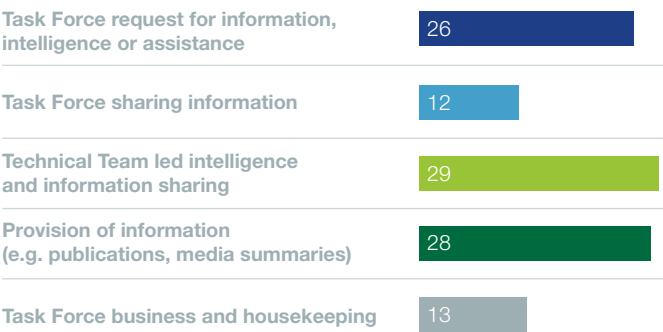
- Establishment of communication channels and contacts with flag and port States.
- Regular exchange of information with other regional organisations such as the SRFC, ICCAT and FISH-i Africa.
- Communication with INTERPOL on IUU listed and Purple Notice vessels.

The WATF Communications Platform began operation in 2015. It connects 50 people from the six member countries and the Technical Team. By April 2017, 108 message threads have been initiated and a total of 525 comments have accumulated.

BREAKDOWN BY AGENCY/ORGANISATION

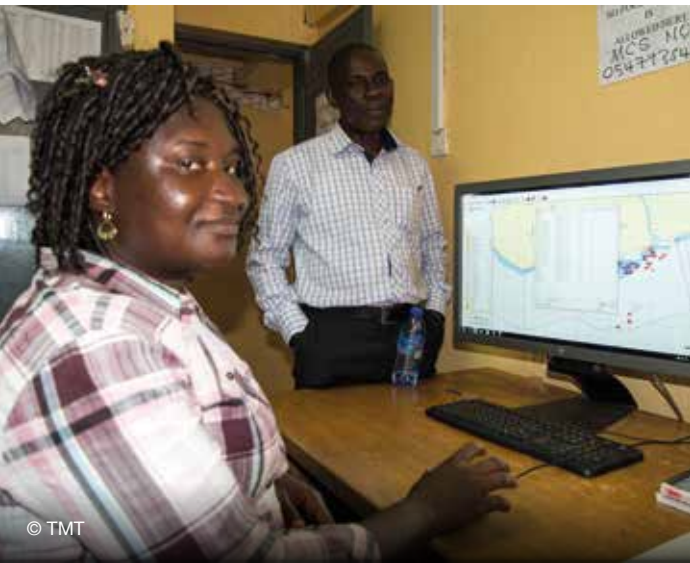


MESSAGE TYPES



THREADS

Looking at the nature of communications that have taken place on the WATF Communications Platform since 2015, and their results and impacts, provides useful insight into the focus and effectiveness of the WATF.



RESULTS OR IMPACTS	THREADS
Bilateral or regional information sharing and cooperation between WATF countries	39
Low-level enforcement action by a WATF country, e.g. port inspections, licensing and flagging due diligence checks	19
Building national level capacity to conduct intelligence gathering and analytical work, strengthening MCS operational capabilities	15
Intelligence and analytical activities that engage intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) and result in improved information sharing and cooperation by or with WATF countries	10
High-level enforcement actions by a WATF country e.g. targeted MCS operations, vessel arrests/detentions, prosecutions, and requests for INTERPOL notices or IUU listing by an RFMO	7
Improved national inter-agency cooperation and concrete cooperative action	7
Activities that result in first action of this type by a WATF country	2
Intelligence and Analytical activities that engage IGOs and result in concrete enforcement action, either directly or indirectly	2

HOW IS IT WORKING?

- **108 conversations** have taken place on the Communications Platform, with 525 comments.
- **Real time sharing of information** and the open nature of the Communications Platform has led to faster responses to information or assistance requests.

- **Full translation** means that language barriers have been overcome and misunderstandings and misinterpretations avoided.

WHAT ARE THE TASK FORCE SAYING?

“The Communications Platform is a real-time tool for information sharing. It is an effective platform for collaboration among States in the fight against IUU fishing.”

Kouassi Auguste Dago, Maritime Affairs, Côte d’Ivoire

“Easy to access and timely information sharing has led to efficient decision making.”

Lt/Col Bina Fofana, Fisheries, Côte d’Ivoire

CAPACITY BUILDING

The awareness, confidence, knowledge and expertise of fisheries inspectors and allied agencies is critical to ensure that illegal operators are identified and successful enforcement action is taken. The WATF has developed capacity at the national, regional and international level.

Establishing WATF National Working Groups has led to:

- Greater awareness of IUU fishing as an issue, and of the value of losses being inflicted through illegal fishing.
- Increased knowledge about the modus operandi utilised in illegal fishing and related activities.
- Better operational procedures for evidence collection, data analysis and inspections.

Regional trainings have allowed for:

- Practical training exercises that build confidence and procedural knowledge.
- Real life scenarios that are explored and practised in real life situations.
- International expertise that brings fresh ideas and creates two-way awareness of issues and on the ground capacity.

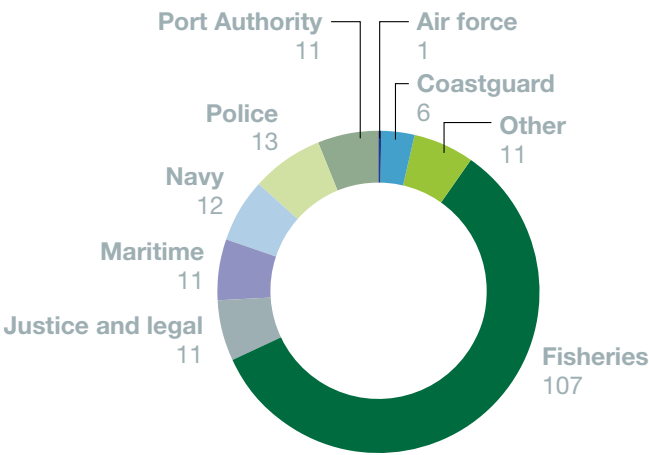
Practical and technical publications and training materials have been developed to support fisheries enforcement, including:

- 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. transshipment, reefer activity.
- A Legal Analysis of the regional and national legislative framework for MCS in the region.
- A Photo Manual for Fisheries Enforcement, to provide practical advice on taking and using photos.
- Awareness material to highlight issues and challenges.
- Regular circulation of relevant press coverage of illegal fishing in the West Africa region.



© TMT

WATF REGIONAL TRAINING AND NWGS HAVE INVOLVED 183 PARTICIPANTS FROM A WIDE RANGE OF AGENCIES



HOW IS IT WORKING?

- **183 WATF members** participated in training.
- **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.
- **Resources have been created** to meet the needs of the Task Force and are made easily accessible to all alongside wider resources.

WHAT ARE THE TASK FORCE SAYING?

“The WATF has provided training benefits for the Nigerian Navy, Nigerian Air Force, Marine Police, Nigerian Customs Services as well as relevant staff of Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) whose duties are associated with fisheries protection to understand better the essence of fight against IUU Fishing in the national and EEZ waters.”

Aduke Kupolati, Fisheries, Nigeria

“In Togo we are aware that we need to strengthen capacity in the fight against IUU fishing. Through the WATF we have set up an efficient and dynamic NWG which is big progress.”

Ayétou Adjoh-Komlan , Maritime Affairs, Togo

“The NWG is an extension of the Fisheries Enforcement Unit, thus through it we were able to bring on board many other agencies that are involved in fisheries activities and operations monitoring.”

Godfrey Baidoo-Tsibu, Fisheries, Ghana

“Setting up a NWG has brought us real benefits in building capacity to tackle the trade in illegally caught fish. Combined with the toolbox of resources and real time information sharing and support we are now better able to stop illegal fishing.”

Ghislain Nadjimou Sossa, Fisheries, Benin



SUPPORTING REGIONAL CAPACITY TO TACKLE ILLEGAL FISHING

The FCWC has several conventions and plans of action designed to strengthen governance and increase cooperation across the six member States, these include the:

- 2009 FCWC Regional Plan of Action on IUU fishing.
- 2013 Convention on Minimum Requirements for Access to the Fishery Resources of the Area of the FCWC.
- 2014 Convention on the Pooling and Sharing of Information and Data on Fisheries in the Zone of the FCWC.

The WATF assessed the state of domestication of these conventions and the plan of action into the legal frameworks within each FCWC country and assessed the strengths and weaknesses in national legislation to combat IUU fishing. The results of the assessment are contained in a report 'A review of FCWC countries' legal frameworks for fisheries – Focus on progress with domestication of FCWC provisions and capacity to combat IUU fishing.'

Within the process of assessing the capacity to combat IUU fishing, the most common violations of fisheries legislation in the FCWC region were identified as a means to evaluate the provisions of the existing legal frameworks. The most common fisheries violations law enforcement officers deal with in the FCWC region are:

- 1) Fishing without a licence/authorisation or with an expired licence/authorisation.
- 2) Fishing with unauthorised or illegal gear (including small mesh size) or methods.
- 3) Fishing in prohibited areas (including in areas reserved to artisanal fisheries).
- 4) Use of forged documentation in relation to fishing activities.
- 5) Provision of false, inaccurate or incomplete information on catch and fishing activities (knowingly with the intent to deceive).
- 6) Illegal transshipment of catch (including of by-catch into canoes and sale of fish at sea).
- 7) Trading in illegal fish (knowingly purchasing, selling, importing or exporting fish caught illegally).
- 8) Targeting of unauthorised species (e.g. below minimum size/immature or valuable by-catch).
- 9) Damage to artisanal gear by industrial fishing vessels or merchant vessels.

The review conclusions and recommendations include a plan of action for completing the domestication of FCWC provisions within national frameworks.



WHAT RESULTS?

The positive effects of the WATF are being felt throughout the region as communication has improved, new cooperation has been established nationally, regionally and internationally, the collaborative approach is focusing effort and energy, and capacity building is improving interventions.

The benefits of the WATF are seen in:

INCREASED AWARENESS

- **Due diligence checks** when flagging and licensing vessels.
- **Improved knowledge** about illegal fishing and the trade in illegal fish in the region is leading to new approaches, activities and priorities.
- **Involving relevant agencies in the NWGs** has increased focus on illegal fishing activities and is building knowledge and awareness.



WHAT ARE THE TASK FORCE SAYING?

“The WATF enables me to connect easily with the actors in the field, to create strong working links and allow speedy handling of issues. I am now very interested in the fight against IUU fishing!”
Kouassi Auguste Dago, Maritime Affairs, Côte d’Ivoire

“We have benefitted from the alerts circulated on ongoing investigations and on IUU vessels. It’s good to know what is happening in the region.”
Kasseau Hermann Gangbazo, Fisheries, Benin

“The easy sharing of fisheries information on the Communications Platform with a broad range of agencies from all the countries has made a big difference in awareness of fishing activities and issues.”
Ahoedo Kossi, Fisheries, Togo

“The WATF contribute to more effective governance of regional fisheries resources in West Africa through a reduction of illegal fishing, one of the key activities being to provide on-going technical and legal support related to fisheries intelligence and resulting MCS operations.”
Seraphin Dedi Nadje, FCWC Secretariat

GROWTH OF TRANSPARENCY AND TRUST

- **Information on over 300 licensed fishing vessels** has been shared by the WATF.
- **Active sharing of country level information** is a significant first step to increasing transparency and trust.
- **The shared Communications Platform has increased openness** and made follow up on enquires and investigations more successful.

WHAT ARE THE TASK FORCE SAYING?

“The WATF makes the FCWC Convention on information sharing operational, whilst information must begin at the national level sharing regionally is critical and by being open with each other we will be more effective in stopping the trade in illegally caught fish.”
Lt/Col Bina Fofana, Fisheries, Côte d’Ivoire

“Our National MCS Center efforts supported by WATF have reduced incidence of illegal fishing by 83 % in Liberian waters.”
William Boeh, Fisheries, Liberia.

MORE TARGETED AND EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS

- **26 intelligence reports** (INTREPS) prepared for potential high risk vessels and cases.
- Identification of risk vessels and owners has led to **improved flagging and licensing decisions.**
- **Cross checking and verification of licence and vessel information** has highlighted where further action or investigation is required.
- **Vessel Tracking and analysis** has provided alerts for possible unauthorised fishing activity and illegal transshipment.

WHAT ARE THE TASK FORCE SAYING?

“Our NWG has enhanced our MCS efficiency and law enforcement making investigations and prosecutions more effective.”
Captain Kwafo, Navy, Ghana

“The interagency mix of our NWG means we can share information easily and make decisions efficiently.”
Kasseau Hermann Gangbazo, Fisheries, Benin

“We are pooling our forces through the WATF and the NWGs, it makes it difficult for a fishing vessel that has committed an offence to get away with it. Together we are stronger.”
Kouassi Auguste Dago, Maritime Affairs, Côte d’Ivoire

“It has strengthened cooperation and collaboration between the national agencies involved in the monitoring of the fisheries activities and increase compliance at sea.”
Aduke Kupolati, Federal Department of Fisheries, Nigeria

WHAT DOES THE WATF DO?

Through the routine sharing and cross checking of information, analysis of vessel tracking information and through capacity building the WATF has engaged in a range of activities and investigations. The following pages provide a snapshot of some of the enforcement actions, investigations and reforms that highlight the growing cooperation between and within the National Working Groups. Challenges have been highlighted to demonstrate future priorities and positive outcomes indicate progress made.

INCONSISTENT INFORMATION TRIGGERS INVESTIGATION OF THE BLUE GATE

THE ARRIVAL OF THE BLUE GATE IN PORT HARCOURT, NIGERIA IN APRIL 2016 LED TO ENQUIRIES INTO ITS REGISTRATION AND ACTIVITIES REVEALING INCONSISTENCIES IN THE VESSEL DOCUMENTS AND INFORMATION.

KEY EVENTS

April 2016 - Routine WATF monitoring of AIS identified the British flagged BLUE GATE arriving in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. This was identified as a vessel of interest, as British flagged fishing vessels are not authorised to operate in the region, and led to enquiries into its registration and activity.

The Nigerian Federal Department of Fisheries (FDF) consulted with the Nigerian Vessel Registry to confirm the identity and stated activities of the BLUE GATE. It was confirmed that the Nigerian owners, a company involved in the offshore oil industry, had applied for a Nigerian flag in late March. Documents supplied to the registry office did not include the vessel's IMO and listed the vessel type as 'supply/utility'. Some inconsistencies between the vessel's registration certificate and bill of sale prompted a further investigation by the Nigerian authorities, which revealed that the vessel was a trawler. As a result, the vessel was required to provide additional documents, including the certificate of deletion from the British vessel registry. The vessel was subsequently flagged to Nigeria as a supply vessel, and it was confirmed as no longer configured for fishing operations.

COOPERATION

- National.

KEY PLAYERS

- Nigerian Department of Fisheries.
- Nigerian Vessel Registry.

COLLABORATION

- Routine WATF monitoring of vessel activity.

COMMUNICATION

- WATF Communications Platform - information alert.

CHALLENGES

- Inconsistencies in vessel identity information (e.g. IMO and vessel type) supplied to authorities makes cross checking and verification difficult.
- Many vessels transmit incorrect vessel information over AIS.
- International vessel information sources are frequently incorrect or out of date.

CONCLUSION

Incorrect vessel information can be a deliberate ploy to mislead authorities, or just a result of poor record keeping. With no mandatory unique vessel identifiers required and no global system of identifying and recording fishing vessels, confirming vessel identity, type and registration can be challenging.



© GHISLAIN NADJIMOU SOSSA



THE SYLVALINE JONAH

DUE DILIGENCE IDENTIFIES UNFLAGGED VESSEL: THE SYLVALINE JONAH

A REQUEST FOR A BENIN FISHING LICENCE TRIGGERED AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE REGISTRATION AND AUTHORISATION STATUS OF THE SYLVALINE JONAH AND VESSELS UNDER THE SAME NIGERIAN OWNERSHIP.

KEY EVENTS

September 2015 – the trawler SYLVALINE JONAH, claiming a Nigerian flag but unable to provide a registration certificate or external waters fishing licence, requested a licence to fish in the EEZ of Benin.

In response to a request from Benin the Nigerian Federal Department of Fisheries consulted with the Maritime Administration and confirmed that the vessel was not flagged to Nigeria.

Benin shared vessel documents for further investigation. Analysis identified discrepancies in the documents provided – specifically, the year of build on the vessel's Survey Certificate differed from that recorded on the 'Vessel specifications' document drawn up by the vessel's owner. Further research identified that SYLVALINE JONAH was one of four vessels owned by Niger Delta Seafoods Company Ltd, thought to be a company founded by the Ministry of Agriculture in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

October 2015 – SYLVALINE JONAH departed Benin to return to Nigeria and clarify its status, correctly register, and obtain the necessary authorisations to fish.

December 2015 – Nigerian authorities confirmed that the Government of Bayelsa State owns the vessel. The vessel and its sister ships were leased to a private individual and were not at that time put forward for registration and authorisation as they should have been. As a result of the information and alert provided by Benin, the operator began the process of obtaining registration and authorisations for the fleet.

COOPERATION

- National.
- Regional.

KEY PLAYERS

- The Nigerian Federal Department of Fisheries.
- Nigerian Maritime Administration.
- Benin Department of Fisheries.

COLLABORATION

- Benin and Nigeria worked together to compare documents and photographs relating to the SYLVALINE JONAH to establish flagging details.

COMMUNICATION

- WATF Communications Platform – request for assistance.

CHALLENGES

- Inconsistencies in records of vessel information make cross checking and verification difficult.
- Lack of publicly available flag registration details enables operators to falsely claim flags, and reduce costs and oversight.

CONCLUSION

Public access to flag registrations would help to ensure compliance.

HIJACKED VESSEL JU YUAN 1 CAUGHT ILLEGALLY TARGETTING TUNA

CHINESE OWNED PURSE SEINER JU YUAN 1, OPERATING UNDER A CÔTE D’IVOIRE FLAG, RE-FUELLED IN BENIN FOLLOWING A HIJACKING THAT HAD FORCED THE VESSEL TO SAIL TO NIGERIAN WATERS. BENIN FISHERIES INSPECTORS FOUND FADS AND TUNA ON BOARD INDICATING THE VESSEL HAD BEEN OPERATING ILLEGALLY.

KEY EVENTS

December 2015 – The JU YUAN 1, a Côte d’Ivoire flagged fishing vessel sending distress signals, was given port access in Benin. Benin conducted a vessel inspection and documented the vessel’s licences, certificates, logbook, crew list, fishing gear on board and contents of the hold. The vessel had purse seine nets and fish aggregating devices (FADs) on board and 16 tuna were found in the hold.

Officers were Chinese and unable to communicate with the inspectors from Benin but interviews conducted with crew members revealed that the vessel had been hijacked and sailed to waters off Nigeria before being abandoned. They claimed that the vessel had entered port in Benin in order to refuel before returning to Côte d’Ivoire.

Benin used the WATF Communications Platform to alert the flag state Côte d’Ivoire to the results of the inspection, in particular the fact that the vessel’s fishing licence was to target sardines, but tuna were found in the hold.

January 2016 – Côte d’Ivoire confirmed that whilst vessels targeting sardines with purse seines sometimes catch tuna, the presence of FADs on board indicated that the vessel was deliberately targeting tuna. Benin was requested to provide images of the tuna and gear on board to further the investigation. Photos from the inspection were shared over the WATF Communications Platform.

COOPERATION

- Regional.
- International.

KEY PLAYERS

- Benin and Côte d’Ivoire.
- Chinese Embassy request for assistance locating hijacked vessel.

COLLABORATION

- Côte d’Ivoire acted on the basis of information supplied by Benin.

COMMUNICATION

- A request for assistance in locating the JU YUAN 1 was shared with the WATF.
- Inspection results were shared by Benin.

CHALLENGES

- Language barriers can make it difficult to communicate with vessels’ operators and establish facts.

CONCLUSION

In response to Benin’s findings, inspections conducted by Côte d’Ivoire of JU YUAN 1 and all of its sister-ships revealed that two vessels owned by this company had tuna purse seines and FADs on board, indicating that they were targeting tuna in clear violation of their licence terms. The vessel Operator was fined 10 million CFA (15 000 EUR) per vessel, the tuna purse seine gear was seized, and the vessels’ fishing licences were suspended for a period of six months.

TRAINING EXERCISE IDENTIFIES IUU-LISTED VESSEL

KNOWN IUU-LISTED TOOTHFISH VESSEL RAY WAS THOUGHT TO BE ACTIVE IN WEST AFRICA DURING 2015. THE WATF SPOTTED A SIMILAR LOOKING VESSEL, NAMED YELE, AT ANCHORAGE OUTSIDE THE PORT OF LOMÉ, TOGO DURING A TRAINING EXERCISE. PHOTO ANALYSIS CONFIRMED THE MATCH.

KEY EVENTS

31 July 2016 – The Togo National Working Group of the WATF noticed similarities between the YELE, at anchor outside the port of Lomé, and IUU listed RAY.

3 August 2016 – Togo conducted an inter-agency inspection of the vessel and obtained documentation, which was analysed by the Task Force. Documentation on board confirmed that the vessel is the former RAY, renamed YELE. Registration documents were confirmed by Sierra Leone to be genuine.

Some gear was documented that indicated that the vessel had been fishing with bottom-set gillnets, but these did not appear to have been recently deployed. No catch was found on board. The Captain claimed that the vessel had come to Lomé to undergo repairs.

5 August 2016 – Togo, having ratified the Port State Measures Agreement only days earlier, refused further port access and YELE was ordered to depart Togolese waters, and complied. The vessel’s destination was unknown. WATF members and neighbouring states were alerted in case the vessel should attempt to call in to another port in the region.

October 2016 – YELE was noted in port call records for Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire. Côte d’Ivoire inspected the vessel before the YELE left port.

Photos of the vessel were shared with INTERPOL by Togo. CCAMLR also received updates. A WATF Member, with the assistance of the Technical Team, was able to contribute to international efforts to track the activities of a vessel that was IUU listed for operations far beyond West Africa.

COOPERATION

- National.
- Regional.
- International.

KEY PLAYERS

- Togo.
- INTERPOL.
- CCAMLR.
- Sierra Leone.

COLLABORATION

- Navy and Fisheries inspectors carried out the joint inspection.

COMMUNICATION

- Photos of the vessel are shared with INTERPOL by Togo.
- CCAMLR is provided with updates on the YELE’s location and activity.
- Sierra Leone reviewed and confirmed authenticity of registration documents.
- Sub-regional Fisheries Commission MCS Coordinator alerted member States.

CHALLENGES

- Difficulties for WATF members to take action concerning violations that did not take place in national waters.
- IUU listed vessels frequently change name, flag and other identities.
- Countries, such as Sierra Leone, flag vessels without adequate due diligence.

CONCLUSION

The Technical Team continue to search for new sightings of the vessel as part of regular monitoring work, and countries are on standby to identify the vessel, should it seek to call into a WATF port in the future.



FADS FOUND ON THE HIJACKED VESSEL

© GOVERNMENT OF BENIN



ILLEGAL TUNA FOUND ON-BOARD

LIBERIA DENIES FLAG TO HIGH RISK VESSEL: THE NEW BAI I NO. 168

VESSEL IDENTITY FRAUD AND DOCUMENT FORGERY WERE UNCOVERED WHEN THE NEW BAI I NO. 168 APPLIED FOR LIBERIAN REGISTRATION WHILST UNDER INVESTIGATION BY SENEGALESE AUTHORITIES.

KEY EVENTS

October 2015 – Liberia received an application to register the carrier vessel NEW BAI I NO. 168. Documents supplied by the operator and a photo which indicated that the vessel is a former longliner converted to operate as a fish carrier were shared with the WATF to enable background checks.

Enquiries revealed that the vessel was in Dakar and under investigation by authorities in Senegal. The operator claimed that the vessel was previously named SAMUDERA and flagged to Indonesia, but the authorities in Indonesia confirmed that the Indonesian registration certificate was a forgery. Analysis of the information shared by Liberian and Senegalese authorities revealed a number of inconsistencies indicative of vessel identity fraud.

Authorities in Senegal reported that the vessel had previously operated out of Dakar as the TAI YUAN NO. 227, claiming a Taiwanese flag. Photo analysis and cross-referencing of crew lists indicated that this was probably the case.

The vessel owners, Chi Hsiang Fishery Co. Ltd and Bali Ocean Anugrah Linger Indonesia, listed on the application to the Liberian registry, were noted to be involved in several historic and ongoing cases of illegal fishing and vessel identity fraud in other regions of the world (Indian and Pacific Oceans). One of these companies is also listed as the owner of the vessel SAMUDERA PASIFIK NO. 18 – currently IUU listed by ICCAT for contravention of transshipment regulations.

Information and documentation shared by Senegal indicated that the NEW BAI I NO. 168 engaged in transshipment at sea in September and October 2015. The vessel was not authorised to operate in the ICCAT area at this time, neither under the new name nor either of the possible previous names. Several of the longline fishing vessels listed on the transshipment document supplied were also not ICCAT authorised – indicating that the vessel was supporting an illegal fishing operation. Records also showed that the vessel was specifically transshipping sharks from the longliners, indicating that the operation may have been set up for this particularly lucrative trade.

COOPERATION

- Regional.
- International.

KEY PLAYERS

- Senegal and Liberia.
- Indonesia.

COLLABORATION

- WATF routine due diligence flagging check.

COMMUNICATION

- With authorities in Senegal.
- Flag State communication with Indonesia.

CHALLENGES

- The ease with which illegal operators can change flag.
- Lack of cross checking between flag registries.
- Vessels with illegal fishing history in one region/ocean can move to another region where information about historic activities is unlikely to be known.
- Indications more mini-reefers are entering fisheries.

CONCLUSION

The vessel was flagged as high risk and Liberia did not register or licence the vessel. Liberia requested ICCAT to IUU list the vessel, whose current location is unknown.



TAIWAN ACTS AGAINST UNLICENSED FISHING IN LIBERIAN EEZ BY THE YEUN HORNG NO. 2

A TAIWANESE LONGLINER, FALSELY TRANSMITTING ITS VESSEL TYPE AS A ‘PLEASURE CRAFT’ OVER AIS, WAS IDENTIFIED AS FISHING WITHOUT A LICENCE IN THE LIBERIAN EEZ.

KEY EVENTS

June 2016 – The Liberia Fisheries Monitoring Center identified a vessel transmitting the name YEUN HORNG NO. 2, and vessel type ‘Pleasure craft’ over AIS that had entered the Liberian EEZ and was operating in a pattern consistent with longline fishing operations. This was identified as a Taiwanese flagged longliner that was authorised to operate in the ICCAT area but did not have a licence to fish in the EEZ of Liberia.

Investigations indicated that the vessel had departed Tema, Ghana on 21 April 2016 and begun operations in Sierra Leone on 26 April 2016, but had almost immediately crossed into the EEZ of Liberia. During the following months the YEUN HORNG NO. 2 made several more incursions into the EEZ of Liberia.

July 2016 – In response to information posted on the WATF Communications Platform, Ghana shared the results of a vessel inspection conducted in Tema in April 2016, including copies of vessel documentation and information on catch offloaded. This served to confirm the identity of the vessel tracking on AIS in Liberian waters. Sierra Leone confirmed that the vessel was licensed there.

With no opportunity for a WATF member to inspect or detain the vessel after the suspected IUU fishing was detected, Liberia contacted the flag State, Taiwan, who stated that they would recall the vessel and investigate. The vessel shifted its operations to the high seas outside the Liberian EEZ, but remained fishing in the region for several weeks, only commencing transit to Taiwan in late September 2016.

November 2016 – Taiwan informed Liberia that the vessel had been investigated and punitive measures taken against the vessel, Captain and owner. The nature and extent of measures taken is not known.

April 2017 – Taiwan advise Liberia that the vessel is held under detention in Taiwan awaiting official communication confirming the owners have paid the required fines in Liberia. Final charges are being prepared.

COOPERATION

- Regional.
- International.

KEY PLAYERS

- Ghana supplied details of inspection.
- Sierra Leone confirmed authorisation there.
- Liberia communicated with Taiwan for assistance.
- Taiwan recalled and inspected the vessel.

COLLABORATION

- Routine WATF monitoring of vessel activity.

COMMUNICATION

- Details of the EEZ incursions were shared with the WATF and Sierra Leone.

CHALLENGES

- Misrepresentation of vessel type on AIS can make identification of fishing vessels and any illegal fishing activity difficult to identify.

CONCLUSION

Coastal states have the jurisdiction to take enforcement action against vessels that operate illegally in their waters, but do not always have the resources or opportunity to detain vessels, particularly those that do not call in to port. Cooperation by flag and port States is essential for coastal State enforcement action. Enforcement by flag States should not be seen as a substitute for coastal States enforcing compliance to their own regulations.

TASK FORCES COOPERATE AGAINST ROGUE FLAGGING AGENT

IN RESPONSE TO THE YELLOW CARD ISSUED BY THE EU, COMOROS MADE EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY AND CONTROL VESSELS THAT WERE OPERATING UNDER OR CLAIMING THE COMOROS FLAG. A REQUEST WAS MADE TO WATF COUNTRIES TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ON ANY VESSELS LICENSED TO FISH IN THEIR EEZS, OR THAT HAD CALLED IN TO PORT IN THE REGION CLAIMING TO BE COMOROS FLAGGED.

KEY EVENTS

August 2015 – the Comoros raised concerns regarding the activities of one of its reefers, the SILVER ICE. She had called at a number of ports in the West African region, delivering fish caught in Guinea-Bissau and Guinea.

The vessel was also being investigated by Liberia for the illegal offloading of fish.

October 2015 – Although no proof of illegal activity was confirmed, the SILVER ICE was classified as a high-risk vessel by the WATF.

April–May 2016 – the Comoros requested any information regarding licensing and activities of Comoros flagged vessels in the WATF area. Togo, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire shared information about a number of Comoros flagged vessels that called in to their ports, including dates of port calls.

COOPERATION

- International.

KEY PLAYERS

- Togo, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire shared information with the Comoros.

COLLABORATION

- WATF respond to Comoros request to share information.

COMMUNICATION

- WATF Communications Platform alerts.

CHALLENGES

- The risks of countries operating an open registry are highlighted here. With an uncooperative agent flagging fishing vessels without any due diligence, Comoros had no means of knowing how many or which vessels were operating under their flag, and no means of controlling the activities of vessels fishing far from its waters.

A lack of public information on licensed vessels, port calls and flag registration allows illegal operators to play the system to their benefit.

CONCLUSION

Information supplied by the WATF enabled Comoros to better understand the operations of their fleet. Any proof of illegal activity may lead to the de-flagging of vessel by the Comoros.

NIGERIA TAKES THE LEAD ON IMO NUMBERS

IN A MOVE DESIGNED TO CONTROL NIGERIAN FLAGGED FISHING VESSELS NIGERIA'S FEDERAL MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES (FDF) 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 1ST OF MARCH 2017.

KEY EVENTS

2016 – IHS, the organisation responsible for receiving applications and designating IMO numbers on behalf of IMO, in cooperation with TMT adjusted the procedures for submitting IMO applications, which included the opportunity for flag States to make fleet wide applications. Guidelines for the process were produced and distributed to the WATF.

IMO numbers provide a unique identifier that stays with a fishing vessel for its operational life. IMO numbers have been identified by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) as crucial to their Global Record of Fishing Vessels, and as a tool that makes it more difficult for fishing vessels to operate outside the law.

November 2016 – in response to growing awareness of the misuse of identity information by fishing vessels and delays caused when checking and verifying vessel information, Nigerian authorities introduced mandatory IMO numbers for all eligible Nigerian flagged or licensed fishing vessels.

March 2017 – all Nigerian vessels are confirmed to have IMO numbers ascribed and clearly marked on their vessels. The Maritime Administration is ensuring that new fishing vessels are only registered if they have IMO numbers; the Navy is mandated to arrest fishing vessels that do not have IMO number or a radio call sign. The FDF will only issue fishing licences to vessels that have both an IMO number and radio call sign.

COOPERATION

- National.

KEY PLAYERS

- Nigerian Federal Department of Fisheries.
- Nigerian Port Authority.
- Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency.
- Nigerian Navy.
- TMT.

COLLABORATION

- A range of Nigerian agencies collaborated with IHS and the WATF.

COMMUNICATION

- Details of this action were shared as 'best practice' within the WATF and more widely.

CONCLUSION

Immediate benefits from the change in regulation have been 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.

These new regulations are planned to become part of the new Sea Fisheries Law of Nigeria.



NIGERIA TAKES THE LEAD ON IMO NUMBERS

INTERAGENCY INSPECTION INITIATED

THE RANGIROA WAS INSPECTED IN TOGO IN A PROCESS WHICH INCLUDED THE MINISTRY OF FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE, THE DEPARTMENT OF MARITIME AFFAIRS, MARITIME BRIGADE AND THE NAVY.

KEY EVENTS

6-7 February 2016 – The RANGIROA was detected in the waters of Ghana and its movements and speed raised concerns of potential illegal fishing related activities. The vessel stopped and held position for 11 hours in Ghana’s EEZ, which highlighted the possibility of a transshipment at sea taking place. Ghana requested assistance from the Technical Team and that the Task Force be on standby.

11 March 2016 – The vessel entered the port of Lomé, Togo, where it was inspected on the 16 March. The inspection involved the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture, the Department of Maritime Affairs, Maritime Brigade and the Navy. This was the first time that Togo had inspected a reefer, and the high level of inter-agency cooperation was an important indicator of the progress being made.

COOPERATION

- National.

KEY PLAYERS

- Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture.
- Department of Maritime Affairs.
- Maritime Brigade.
- Navy.

COLLABORATION

- Routine WATF monitoring of vessel activity.

CHALLENGES

- Reefers had not been considered fisheries vessels previously in Togo, and so fisheries officials had no experience inspecting this type of vessel.

CONCLUSION

The results of the investigation were shared with the TF and no illegal activities were detected. Togo took an important step inspecting a reefer for the first time.

FRAUDULENT FLAG CLAIMS IDENTIFIED

THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL CASES OF VESSELS ENGAGED IN ILLEGAL FISHING OUTSIDE THE FCWC REGION THAT CLAIMED THE FLAG OF A WATF MEMBER. WHEN SUCH A CASE IS IDENTIFIED, THE TECHNICAL TEAM ALERT THE TASK FORCE MEMBER INVOLVED AND PROVIDE ASSISTANCE IF NECESSARY TO CLARIFY THE VESSEL’S REGISTRATION STATUS AND COMMUNICATE WITH AUTHORITIES INVOLVED.

KEY EVENTS

October 2016 – The vessel SKY WIND, claiming the Togolese flag, was detained by Russia for illegal fishing in the North Pacific. Regular news monitoring by the WATF identified the incident and Togo was alerted. Togo confirmed that this claim was false and that there was no record of this vessel in their registry. This cooperation led to the discovery of the fraudulent use of the Togolese flag.

August 2016 – Systematic monitoring of vessel information sources identified the IUU-listed vessel TCHAW photographed in port in Spain (where it was reportedly under detention), flying the Togolese flag. Togo was notified and confirmed that the vessel had been de-registered in 2013. Togo shared the vessel’s de-registration certificate, which included ownership information. The WATF facilitated sharing this information with authorities in Spain and INTERPOL.

COOPERATION

- International.

KEY PLAYERS

- Russia.
- Spain.
- Togo.
- INTERPOL.

COLLABORATION

- Systematic monitoring by the WATF of media source and port information.

COMMUNICATION

- Coastal State.
- International enforcement agencies.

CHALLENGES

- Lack of availability of flagging information allows illegal operators to make false claims with little chance of checks being made. These cases identify the proactive response needed to refute false flag claims.

CONCLUSION

The WATF continues to monitor activity of vessels active in the region, and also those claiming the flag of WATF members.



INTERAGENCY INSPECTION INITIATED



FRAUDULENT FLAG CLAIMS IDENTIFIED

TRANSHIPMENT SUSPECTED, REEFER INSPECTED

ANALYSIS OF THE ACTIVITY OF THE REEFER GREEN MUSIC SHOWED MOVEMENTS THAT COULD INDICATE ILLEGAL TRANSHIPMENT. INVESTIGATIONS REVEALED THAT THE BEHAVIOUR EXHIBITED WAS LINKED TO MARITIME SECURITY RATHER THAN ANY FISHERIES ILLEGALITY OR VIOLATION.

KEY EVENTS

September 2015 – Routine AIS monitoring by the WATF identified the refrigerated cargo vessel GREEN MUSIC operating in the EEZ of Ghana and showing movement patterns that could be indicative of transshipment at sea, which is prohibited in the Ghanaian EEZ.

The GREEN MUSIC was tracked transiting towards Lagos, Nigeria where the Federal Department of Fisheries was alerted to expect her arrival in port. On her arrival, a team of inspectors from the Fisheries Department and Port Authority conducted an inspection of the vessel. Inspectors obtained copies of the vessel's cargo manifest, which indicated that fish on board had been loaded in the Faeroe Islands and the Netherlands. Freezer logs were also inspected – these showed that the hold temperature was constant throughout the period of interest, which indicates that transshipment probably did not occur.

Ghana contacted the operators of the vessel to request information on the vessels' activities during the period of interest in the Ghana EEZ and corroborating documentation. The operator responded stating that the vessel was carrying cargo to discharge in Nigeria and had chosen to wait in the Ghana EEZ whilst waiting for a berth in Lagos to become available, due to security risks in Nigerian waters. Documents supplied confirmed the number of boxes of fish loaded in the Faeroe Islands and the Netherlands, however information was not available to corroborate this against the quantity of fish offloaded in Lagos. No further action was taken.

COOPERATION

- National.
- Regional.

KEY PLAYERS

- Federal Department of Fisheries, Nigeria.
- Port Authority, Nigeria.
- Navy, Nigeria.

COLLABORATION

- Routine WATF monitoring of vessel activity.

COMMUNICATION

- The WATF Communications Platform was used to alert Nigeria to the expected arrival of the GREEN MUSIC in port.

CHALLENGES

- Fisheries inspectors find it difficult gaining access to refrigerated cargo vessels. In many ports in the region, reefers berth in an area of the port that is not automatically accessible to fisheries inspectors and so gaining access to conduct inspections can be challenging.
- It is difficult to detect whether illegal transshipment has occurred, as the movements (visible on AIS) of vessels engaged in transshipment are very similar to vessels engaged in other activities at sea.

CONCLUSION

The high levels of reefer activity and fish imports into the region mean fisheries inspectors need to remain vigilant to the possibility of illegal transshipment and laundering of illegally caught fish with legal catch.



WHAT NEXT?

The foundations for success have been established through the development of the WATF to focus and further the work of the FCWC. Building on the success of the WATF will require strengthening of the structures and cooperation already established, to ensure that these continue to function for the benefit of the region. This can be achieved by:

- Strengthening ownership, cooperation and buy in, creating awareness, disseminating best practice and building support from the multiple agencies that make up the NWGs.
- Assisting in the formalisation of inter-agency cooperation where it does not exist and help to identify where the need for cooperation is greatest.
- Consolidating the WATF by maintaining and building the core structures of the Task Force of FCWC countries, and the supporting Coordinating and Technical Teams.
- Building on the initial capacity building and cooperation support successes, including the training and operational support for NWGs, regional training, expertise transfer within and beyond the region, and capacity building in fisheries intelligence.
- Maintaining and expanding the toolbox of relevant manuals, training and awareness materials.
- Actively developing cooperation and coordination with other relevant organisations and initiatives working nationally and regionally.
- Research and understand the operations, methods and routes to market used by illegal operators to increase the ability of the WATF to identify risks, focus efforts and increase compliance along the value chain.
- Link to other States involved in the fisheries value chain that have an impact in the West Africa region, for example relevant catch destination port States and market States.
- Increase political awareness of and support for the Task Force and broader MCS priorities to achieve long-term sustainability and stop illegal fishing.
- Integrate port State measures as an effective focus for cooperation and capacity building.
- Analyse how compliance can be increased through the application of licensing and registration conditions of coastal States.
- Support and integrate the development of a regional MCS mechanism to allow for regional patrols and regional shared VMS and AIS tracking.
- Analyse the work and findings of the WATF to provide lesson learning that can feed into regional and global discussions and policy formulation processes, including towards Sustainable Development Goal 14.

The WATF will also develop to bring greater focus and relevance to efforts to stop illegal fishing and the trade of illegally caught fish. To achieve this, next steps will include:





The West Africa Task Force brings together the six member countries of the FCWC – Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Togo – to tackle illegal fishing and fisheries crime. The Task Force is hosted by the FCWC and supported by a Technical Team that includes TMT, Stop Illegal Fishing and NFDS with funding from Norad. By actively cooperating, by sharing information and by establishing interagency working groups the West Africa Task Force are working together to stop illegal fishing.

For more information go to:

www.fcwc-fish.org