

West Africa Task Force
Working together to stop illegal fishing



WEST AFRICA TASK FORCE

INTERAGENCY COOPERATION
IN THE FCWC REGION



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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) and Stop Illegal Fishing with funding from Norad. By actively cooperating, by sharing information and by facilitating national interagency cooperation, the West Africa Task Force is working together to stop illegal fishing.

The West Africa Task Force: Interagency Cooperation in the FCWC region has been produced by Stop Illegal Fishing, Trygg Mat Tracking, and the FCWC Secretariat.



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ACRONYMS

AIS	Automatic identification system
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EEZ	Exclusive economic zone
EU	European Union
FEU	Fisheries Enforcement Unit
FCWC	Fisheries Committee for the West Central Gulf of Guinea
IMO	International Maritime Organization
IUU	Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing
MCS	Monitoring, control and surveillance
MDA	Maritime Domain Awareness
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NIMASA	Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency
NWG	National Working Group
SIF	Stop Illegal Fishing
TMT	Trygg Mat Tracking
VMS	Vessel monitoring system
WATF	West Africa Task Force





Welcome to the latest publication of the West Africa Task Force (WATF).

FOREWORD

Our 2017 publication ‘Cooperation, Collaboration, Communication’ provided an overview of the establishment and development of the WATF in the FCWC region since 2015. We were able to share some of our early successes in tackling illegal fishing from the denial of registration to a vessel using fraudulent documents to the identification of a notorious IUU vessel, to the introduction of mandatory IMO numbers in Nigeria, and subsequently as a requirement for fisheries licensing in the FCWC region.

These actions represent changes in process, identification and policy relating to illegal fishing; all are important steps to improve fisheries management and sustainability in the Gulf of Guinea.

The success of the WATF has provided a solid basis for further due diligence to increase the compliance of the active fleet and for action to be taken against illegal operators. It has created new partnerships and initiatives to support and develop our response to the urgent need for sustainable fisheries and the end of illegal fishing. We greatly appreciate the support from Norad and are pleased to see this amplified by the introduction of the EU-funded PESCAO project that adds further impetus to the FCWC’s efforts to stop illegal fishing. Regional integration is also being facilitated by the sharing of resources from national and regional agencies in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) region.

Illegal fishing and fisheries crime are intrinsically complex, with fishing operations often occurring over a number of jurisdictions and a range of crimes and violations being committed in the process. We know that operators who break the law in one area are likely to be breaking it in others, leading to a range of economic, environmental and human related offences.

By working together with other national agencies our fisheries enforcement teams can improve the prevention, identification, investigation and sanction of criminals operating in the fisheries sector. This approach is reflected in the FAO Port State Measures Agreement that came into force in 2016. In the FCWC region

both Ghana and Togo are already party to this legally binding international agreement and significant progress has been made to accede to the measure in Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia and Nigeria. Our work in supporting interagency cooperation will lead to more effective implementation of port State measures in the region, making this a powerful tool to stop the import and processing of illegally caught fish in our region.

With sustainable development goal 14 calling for an end to illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing by 2020 much international effort and attention is placed on the actions being taken in IUU hotspots. This is reflected in the African Union’s Policy Framework and Reform Strategy for Fisheries and Aquaculture in Africa that calls on African countries to work together to stop loss of nutrition, revenue and governance that results from IUU fishing. We are confident that by building this national awareness of the issue and the capacity and resolve to fight it that the FCWC region will continue to see improvements in the way our members act as responsible coastal, port, flag and market States.

Seraphin Dedi Nadjé

Seraphin Dedi Nadjé
Secretary General of the FCWC

WHY CRIME AND ILLEGALITY IN THE FISHERIES SECTOR IS AN INTERAGENCY ISSUE

Operators who set out to fish illegally commit a range of violations and crimes against national fisheries regulations, national laws, regional conservation and management measures and international laws.

Fisheries authorities alone cannot detect and fight these illegalities effectively. They need information and support from other agencies to be able to identify fisheries violations and enforce laws. To put an end to illegal fishing we also need to identify, investigate and sanction against the many crimes that take place in the fisheries sector.

This is what we know about how illegal fishing operators have been conducting their business globally:

ILLICIT TRADE & SMUGGLING

Fishing vessels provide the perfect cover for conducting other **illicit trade** and **smuggling**.

ILLEGAL AT-SEA TRANSHIPMENT

Vessels conduct **illegal at-sea transshipment** to offload catch, often to launder it into the legal supply chain, to take on board supplies and change crew.

VIOLENCE & INTIMIDATION

Vessels are often crewed through **human trafficking**, with workers tricked into working on the vessel, and then subjected to **forced labour** with **violence** and **intimidation**. They are often stuck at sea with no opportunity to seek help or escape.

MONEY LAUNDERING

Company structures are often set up to hide the beneficial owners making it difficult to identify links with known criminals. It also makes sanctions hard to enforce and **money laundering** hard to establish.

HEALTH & HYGIENE

Illegal operators cut costs across the board including on **health and hygiene**. Violations are significant with little regard for the welfare of the crew or the hygiene of the fish caught.

SEAWORTHINESS

Vessels sail without **seaworthiness clearance certificates** in violation of national laws and risking the lives of the crew.

MISLABELLING

Fish are **mislabeled** with false species information to fool inspectors or customs officials, or to circumvent the EU-IUU regulations, all leading to buyers and consumers being victims of **fraud**.

DEACTIVATED TRACKERS

Once at sea the vessels operate with little or no oversight. Captains **deactivate vessel trackers** such as VMS and AIS to hide their location and activity, also creating a collision risk for other vessels at sea.

STATELESS

STATELESS

STATELESS VESSELS

Fishing vessels may try to keep their previous flag when registering in a new country, in order to maintain certain advantages such as fisheries access or tax benefits. Double flagging or deflagging can render the **fishing vessel stateless**. Being Stateless is illegal and deprives a vessel of important privileges, such as the right to enter and leave territorial waters and ports.

IDENTITY FRAUD

Vessel **identity fraud** for fishing vessels is commonplace as unique vessel identifiers are not mandatory for fishing vessels and insufficient checks are made. Vessels can commit identity fraud when applying for a flag or a licence, or simply to go undetected when coming to port. Non-authorized vessels can take on the identity of legitimately licensed vessels.

ILLEGAL FISHING

On the fishing grounds they **fish illegally**, such as, in restricted areas, use illegal gear, target protected species and discard lower value catch.

FALSIFIED INFORMATION

Offload weights and catch information are falsified denying revenue to governments, whitewashing fish to gain market access, evading handling charges and leading to **tax fraud** for the operators.

CORRUPTION

Corruption is a known facilitator of illegal fishing and fisheries crime. This further undermines governance and development.

FORGING DOCUMENTS

Fishing vessels secure their 'flag' by **forging documents**, claiming a false identity or covering up their history of operating illegally, and targeting flags of non-compliance operated by irresponsible agents.

FAKE
FORGERY

**THESE ARE NOT JUST FISHERIES ISSUES.
THIS IS NOT JUST ILLEGAL FISHING.**

WHY CRIME AND ILLEGALITY IN THE FISHERIES SECTOR IS AN INTERAGENCY ISSUE

Cooperation with other agencies is an important tool for fisheries enforcement officers to build systems to combat IUU fishing and associated crimes.

Through such cooperation, if implemented effectively, the FCWC members will strengthen the rule of law across the fisheries and ocean sectors. Interagency cooperation also increases transparency and therefore reduces opportunities for corruption.

The initial focus areas for cooperation by the West Africa Task Force National Working Groups are:

FISHING VESSELS AND SUPPORT VESSELS

Fishing vessels are central to the prevention, identification and investigation of illegal fishing, and of all monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) activity. Vessel identity fraud is commonplace amongst vessels operating illegally. By using false or forged documents operators can hide a history of illegality or IUU listing. False information on vessel characteristics such as length and gross tonnage may also be used to secure fishing licences or a flag.

Conducting thorough due diligence before licensing or flagging vessels is a critical process for identifying IUU listed or high risk vessels. Whilst the decision to grant access to fish, or to register high risk vessels may still be made, on the basis of increased monitoring of the vessel activity to ensure that regulations and laws are complied with, IUU listed vessels would not be eligible for licensing or flagging.

The main agencies involved are:

	Fisheries MCS	Navy and Coastguard	Maritime Authorities	Air Force	Police	Port Authorities	Customs	Health, Sanitary, Veterinary	Immigration and Labour	Tax	Trade Authorities	Judiciary	Attorney General	Foreign Affairs
Due diligence for licensing the vessel to operate in national waters	●		●											
Due diligence for registering the vessel with national flag	●		●											
Due diligence checks for allowing or denying port access and port services	●	●			●	●								
In port inspections	●		●		●		●	●	●					●
At sea inspections	●	●												●
Investigation into vessel identity	●	●	●		●	●								●
Checks on vessel safety and hygiene	●		●					●						

FISHING ACTIVITY

Checks to establish whether the vessel is operating in accordance with licensing conditions and conservation and management measures can take place through electronic monitoring of the vessel by AIS and/or VMS. This information can show the location and speed of the vessel and analysis can provide insight into the likely activity of the vessel and contact it has with other vessels to e.g. conduct transshipment or bunkering.

Surveillance by patrol vessels, the navy or air force can also provide positional and activity information.

Checks on log books and the catch can establish whether the vessel has been operating in the authorized area, using the correct gear or targeting the appropriate species.

The main agencies involved are:

	Fisheries MCS	Navy and Coastguard	Maritime Authorities	Air Force	Police	Port Authorities	Customs	Health, Sanitary, Veterinary	Immigration and Labour	Tax	Trade Authorities	Judiciary	Attorney General	Foreign Affairs
Aerial and sea patrols	●	●		●	●									
Monitoring of at-sea transshipment	●	●		●										
At sea inspections, including log book and catch checks	●	●												
Investigation into fishing activity	●	●			●									

In addition to cooperation and information sharing with national agencies communication with neighbouring coastal States through the WATF is needed.

THE CATCH

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.

Reefer activity in the region is significant, and unauthorized 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 and reporting regimes. 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.

The main agencies involved are:

	Fisheries MCS	Navy and Coastguard	Maritime Authorities	Air Force	Police	Port Authorities	Customs	Health, Sanitary, Veterinary	Immigration and Labour	Tax	Trade Authorities	Judiciary	Attorney General	Foreign Affairs
Catch data verification	●						●	●						
Trade regulations	●						●	●		●	●			
Catch certification (e.g. EU IUU regulations)	●						●	●						
Transshipment in port or at anchorage	●					●	●	●			●			

In addition to cooperation and information sharing with national agencies communication with market States and the WATF is needed.

THE PEOPLE – CREW, OWNER, OPERATOR AND AGENT

Abuse of crew in the fishing industry has been well documented in recent years, with workers tricked by recruitment agencies to work on fishing vessels where they are then required to work excessive hours, are deprived food and water, live in inadequate conditions and are subject to violence and intimidation. Trapped at sea for months and sometimes years the crew have little opportunity to escape or ask for help.

Crew abuse is not restricted to fishing in the high seas, and working conditions that can be considered highly dangerous or associated with forced labour can also be observed onboard vessels that are locally manned and operate in coastal areas, such as freezer-trawlers.

When in port it is essential that the living and working conditions of the crew are checked and the crew are screened for human trafficking and human rights abuses.

The owners, operators and agents are responsible for any illegal fishing or fisheries crime. Often shell companies based outside of the region own the vessels. To ensure that the owners and operators do not have a track record of non-compliance pre-licensing and pre-flagging checks are needed. Establishing the true beneficial owner is a necessary step in enforcing sanctions and penalties.

The main agencies involved are:

	Fisheries MCS	Navy and Coastguard	Maritime Authorities	Air Force	Police	Port Authorities	Customs	Health, Sanitary, Veterinary	Immigration and Labour	Tax	Trade Authorities	Judiciary	Attorney General	Foreign Affairs
Due diligence checks on the owner/operator for licensing the vessel to operate in coastal waters	●				●				●					
Due diligence checks for the owner/operator registering the vessel with national flag	●		●		●		●		●					
Identification of human trafficking or poor working conditions	●				●	●			●					
Investigation of crew related issues	●				●				●			●		●



Trapped at sea for months and sometimes years the crew have little opportunity to escape or ask for help.

WHAT INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS CAN BE USED TO STOP ILLEGAL FISHING AND FISHERIES RELATED CRIME?

A range of international, regional and national measures provides a framework of regulatory control and legal means to take effective action against illegal operators in the fisheries sector.

Available international agreements relevant to illegal fishing and fisheries related crime, with information on FCWC membership, include:

	Benin	Côte d'Ivoire	Ghana	Liberia	Nigeria	Togo
UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)	●	●	●	●	●	●
1993 FAO Compliance Agreement	●		●			
UN Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA)		(s)		●	●	
UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC)	●	●	●	●	●	●
ILO Work in Fishing Convention (WFC C188)						
2009 Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA)	(s)		●			●
IMO Cape Town Agreement (Not yet in force)						

(s) Signatory

The range of international measures available to countries provides additional opportunity to prosecute or sanction against illegal fishing and fisheries crime. The measures can be used to address areas not adequately covered by national legislation and consideration of the most useful measures to tackle national issues will inform accession and ratification. If multiple crimes are detected it may be possible to prosecute in one area while more complicated in others.



WHAT LEGAL MEANS CAN BE USED TO STOP ILLEGAL FISHING AND FISHERIES RELATED CRIME?

THE PORT STATE MEASURES AGREEMENT

The Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA) is the first binding international agreement designed to prevent trade in illegally caught fish. It sets out the minimum controls a state should use when foreign fishing vessels enter, or apply to enter one of its ports, and to verify that all fish landed are legally caught.

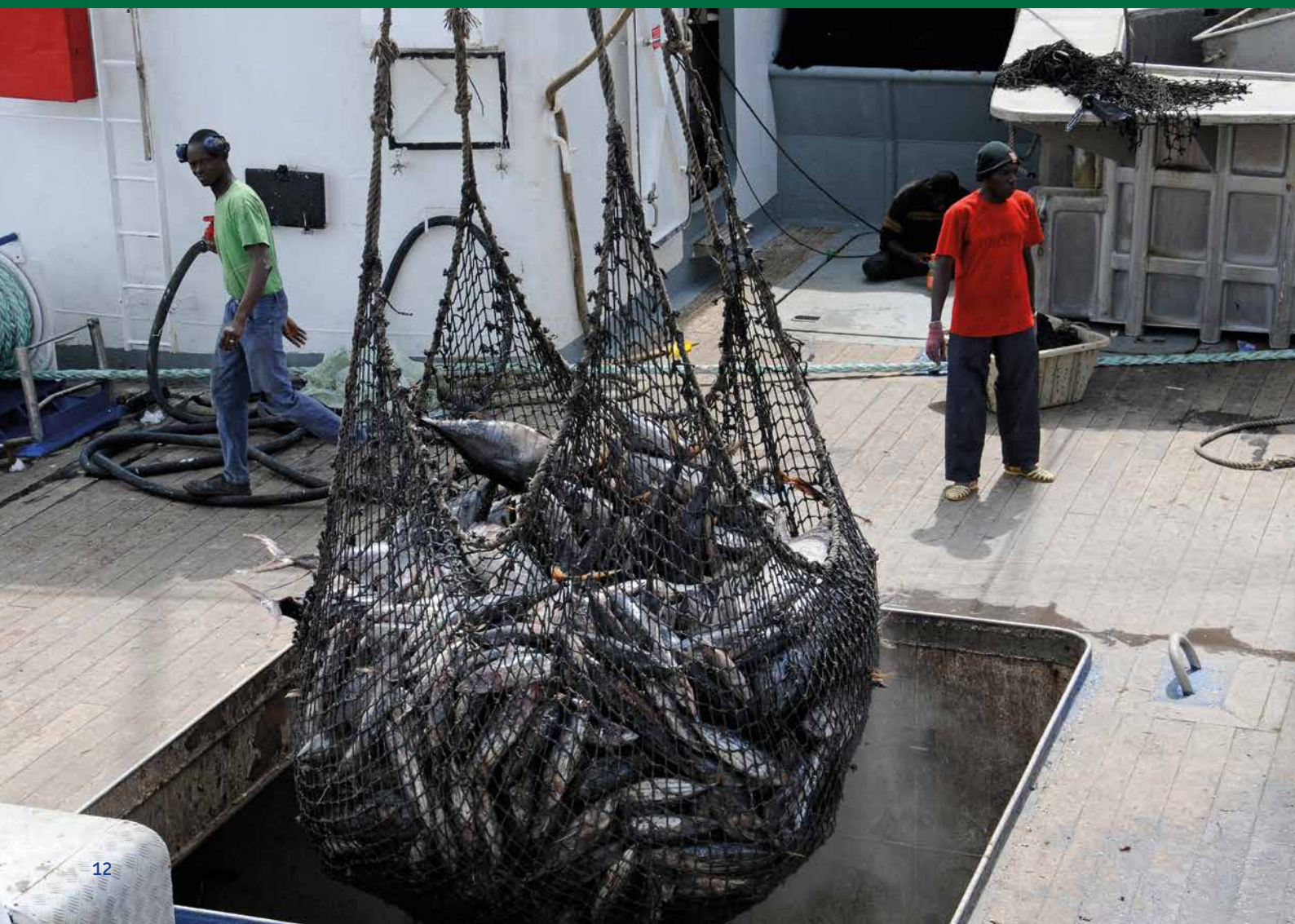
The 'port State' designates which of its ports can be used by foreign vessels and follows a set of standardised procedures to decide whether to allow the vessel to enter, to inspect the vessel and to report and share the results of the inspection with other port States. Follow-up actions to be taken, settlement of disputes, and the role of the vessel's flag State are also included in the PSMA.

Port officials may deny foreign vessels access to a port and services such as refuelling and repairs if they are suspected of illegal activities. Vessels can be turned away or subjected to immediate inspection on arrival and prohibited from landing their fish if there is evidence that it was caught illegally.

The PSMA has an implicit requirement for national, bilateral and regional cooperation with respect to sharing information and reporting. On a national level the effective implementation of the PSMA requires:

- Integration of PSM with other national measures such as MCS arrangements;
- Sharing and exchange of information among relevant national agencies; and
- Coordinating the activities of such agencies.

In deciding whether to allow port entry for a foreign flagged fishing vessel a number of national agencies are involved.





Vessel communicates to Port Authorities

Advance Request for Port Entry

Sharing of information bilaterally with relevant agencies or through interagency cooperation mechanism

Information cross-referencing and risk analysis by relevant agencies:

Fisheries
Navy
Police

Outcomes communicated to PSMA National Focal Point

Decision by Port State

Deny port entry

Grant port entry
Deny all facilities

Grant port entry
All port facilities

Information sharing with national agencies:

Police
Coastguard
Navy
Foreign Affairs

Regional and international cooperation:

Flag State
Port States in the region
WATF

Inspection required

Cooperation with national agencies:

Customs
Immigration
Health, Sanitary, Veterinary
Police
Navy
Foreign Affairs

Regional and international cooperation:

Flag State
WATF

Inspection possible

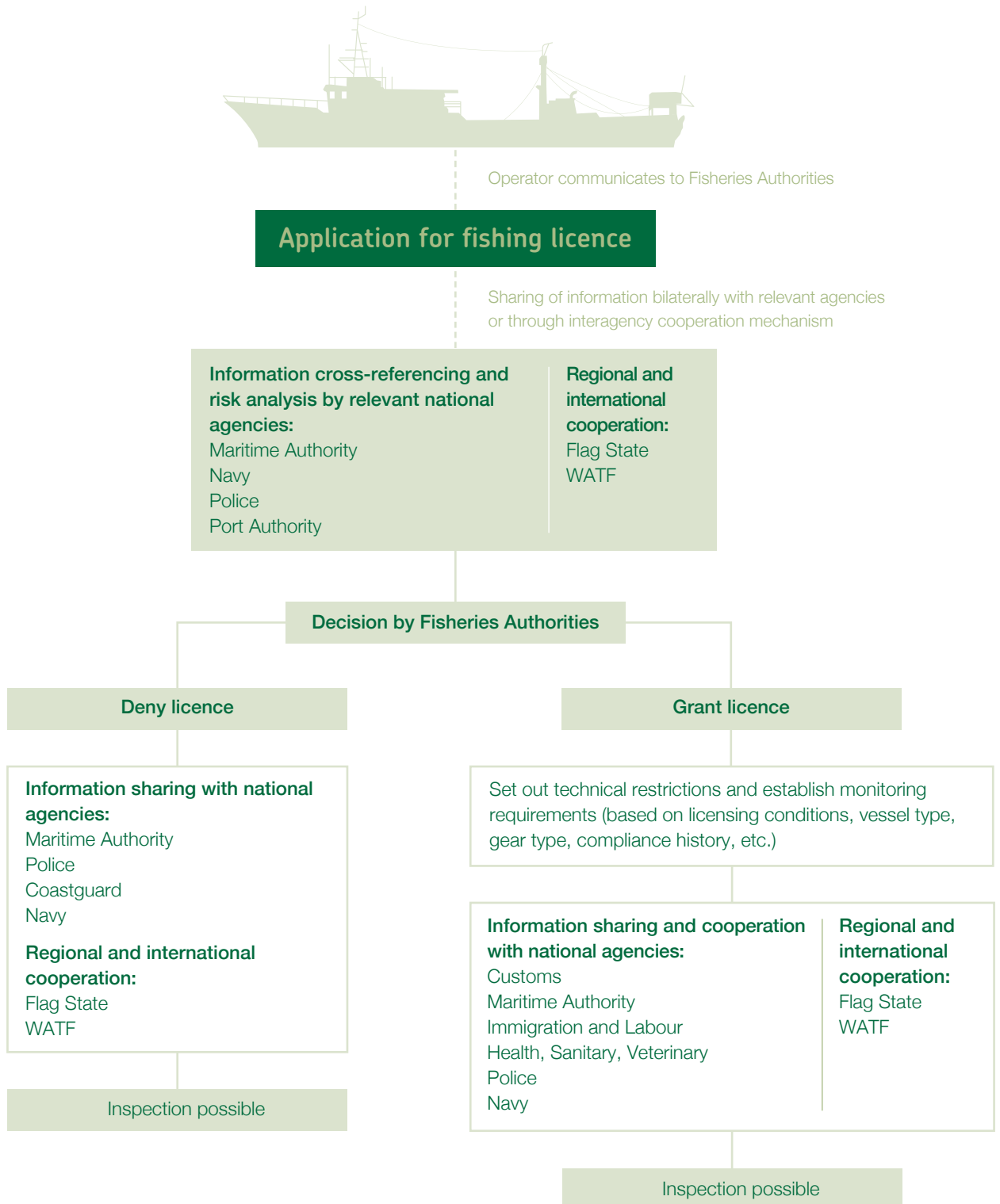
Information sharing and cooperation with national agencies:

Customs
Immigration and Labour
Health, Sanitary, Veterinary
Navy

WHAT NATIONAL MEASURES CAN BE USED TO STOP ILLEGAL FISHING AND FISHERIES RELATED CRIME?

Control of fishing vessels and support or carrier vessels is made at the national level through decisions on licensing and flagging.

Licensing conditions stipulate when, where and how vessels operate. The decision on whether or not to grant a licence is (generally) controlled by the fisheries authorities but support from other national agencies is essential to establish the legality, and risk status of the owner, operator and vessel involved.



Flagging decisions are the domain of maritime authorities. Interagency cooperation with fisheries and other agencies that may be able to share information and intelligence such as the police or navy are important for sound decision making.



Vessel owner communicates to Maritime Authority or appointed agent

Request for national registration, or 'flag'

Sharing of information bilaterally with relevant agencies or through interagency cooperation mechanism

Information cross-referencing and risk analysis by relevant national agencies:
 Fisheries
 Navy
 Police
 Port Authority

Regional and international cooperation:
 Flag State
 WATF

Decision by Maritime Authorities

Deny flag

Information sharing with national agencies:
 Fisheries
 Police
 Coastguard
 Navy
 Immigration and Labour

Regional and international cooperation:
 Flag State
 WATF

Grant flag

Inspection required

Information sharing and cooperation with national agencies:
 Customs
 Immigration and Labour
 Health, Sanitary, Veterinary
 Navy






WHO IS INVOLVED?










Fisheries enforcement officers are central in the fight against illegal fishing and fisheries crime, ensuring that fish are caught, offloaded, transhipped and imported in a legal manner.

As awareness of the range of violations being committed in the fisheries sector has grown, so too has the recognition of the need for fisheries officers to work alongside, and in close cooperation with a range of agencies nationally, regionally and internationally.

Main operational interagency activities:

- Due diligence for licensing
- Due diligence for flagging
- Decision on allowing port access and services
- Remote/electronic monitoring (AIS, VMS etc)
- Inspections in port
- Inspections at sea
- Investigation of suspected illegalities and infringements
- Securing sanctions

Agency	My concerns	What actions can I take?	Areas of cooperation			
			Prevention	Identification	Investigation	Sanction
 Fisheries MCS	Is this a legal fishing operation?	Ensure fishing, offloading, transhipment and fish import is conducted in a legal manner	●	●	●	●
 Navy and Coastguard	Is this vessel being operated legally in my EEZ?	Inspect for compliance at sea.		●	●	
 Maritime Authority	Are maritime standards being met? – e.g. pollution, labour and safety. Is this vessel being operated legally under my flag?	Receive reports from and inspect vessels used for fishing related activities, including carrier and supply vessels. Inspect and survey vessels, and as necessary detain vessels. Enforce regulations over vessels registered under our flag, including those relating to inspection, certification, and issuance of safety and pollution prevention documents	●	●	●	●
 Air Force	Is this vessel being operated legally in my EEZ?	Detect or confirm and photograph any illegal activity in the EEZ, may conduct inspections.		●	●	
 Police	Have any laws been broken? Is information required from other States to complete the investigation into a violation?	Investigate and enforce national laws in accordance with respective mandates, enforce denial of use of port. Request cooperation and international coordination of investigation if one or more foreign States are involved.	●	●	●	●

Agency	My concerns	What actions can I take?	Areas of cooperation			
			Prevention	Identification	Investigation	Sanction
 Port Authorities	Is there any reason why I should deny access to this vessel?	Control entry into port and facilitate inspections.		●	●	
 Customs	Do quantities landed match with those declared? Are products correctly labeled? Are they eligible for trade and are the correct duties being paid?	Inspect and provide customs clearance as appropriate for fish, fish products landed or transhipped in port.		●	●	●
 Health, Sanitary, Veterinary	Are the fish being caught, handled and stored in a hygienic way?	Inspect fish and the working conditions to ensure compliance with relevant national or market States standards, laws and regulations.	●	●		
 Immigration & Labour	Is the crew working legally and safely aboard the vessel?	Inspect ID documents of master and crew. Inspect to ensure relevant national and international standards for labour on board vessels are being met.		●	●	●
 Tax	Have the correct taxes been paid?	Investigate to ensure the correct taxes have been paid.		●	●	●
 Trade	Does the catch comply with all import and export regulations?	Clear or refuse entry to market.		●		
 Judiciary	Have any laws been broken?	Prosecute. Apply appropriate fines and custodial sentences.			●	●
 Attorney General	Are the correct laws in place to deter and prevent illegal fishing? Are they sufficient to prosecute fisheries crime?	Ensure national laws are adequate, review outcomes of investigations and support legal or administrative proceedings in cases of suspected non-compliance or violations.	●			●
 Foreign Affairs	Have any enforcement actions or legal procedures been taken against a foreign vessel?	Take necessary action pursuant to applicable international and national law and policy, including with flag States, other coastal and port States and relevant regional and international organisations.			●	●

HOW DO THE NATIONAL WORKING GROUPS OF THE WEST AFRICA TASK FORCE WORK?

National Working Groups have been established in each of the FCWC member countries as a platform to strengthen interagency cooperation and facilitate its formalization. The aim has been to set up cooperation mechanisms, or to support existing cooperation mechanisms where they are already in place. The structure, status and progress of each NWG reflect both the needs of the country and existing institutional arrangements.

The main objectives of the NWGs are to:

- Facilitate interagency cooperation and collaboration to facilitate fisheries MCS
- Establish national and regional communication mechanisms
- Increase awareness of fisheries issues with relevant agencies

The NWG structure assists agencies to work together in a systematic way and to better understand what information is useful to share. The competencies, capacities and challenges of partner agencies are discussed, as well as how these can be best used. The NWG takes a proactive approach so that agencies can identify situations requiring interagency cooperation, and establish protocols and lines of communication to actively plan for joint activities, share information, and respond to emerging issues.

By working together systematically contacts, relationships and trust are built and these will support effective communication and joint action in times of active operations or investigations.

The NWGs of the WATF have concentrated on the following activities during this initial phase of development:

ESTABLISHING A GROUP

Identifying and prioritizing agencies that fisheries authorities need to work with is a first step before identifying the structures needed to support their cooperation. The agencies involved and the structures developed will depend on the areas that are of particular focus within that country.

Bilateral agreements between relevant agencies and the fisheries administration already exist in some of the FCWC countries. These have usually been developed in response to specific cases of illegal activity or an ongoing need to share information for cross checking and verification purposes.

Agreeing on core values, common goals, and strategic plans allows partners to develop a common language, appreciate the knowledge and experience of others, assume the best intentions, and respect diverse perspectives.

Photo: FCWC



CREATING COMMUNICATION AND BUILDING TRUST

Developing fast, open and effective communication channels between the fisheries authorities and partner agencies will be one of the most important outcomes of the NWG process.

Multilateral meetings have been facilitated in each country, in addition to ongoing bilateral discussions with key agencies led by fisheries authorities. These face-to-face meetings have been essential in getting the NWGs off the ground, and for enabling members to put faces to names and to have the opportunity for open and frank discussion.

Any collaboration builds on personal relationships developed between key personnel. This can help to foster a culture of cooperation, where there is an expectation that each agency will proactively cooperate when needed. Developing trust and respect is important and is being achieved through the 'getting to know you' phase of the NWGs and by the active sharing of information. In contexts where pre-existing relationships had already laid the foundation for interagency work, the NWG allowed for broadening participation, leading to more inclusive and richer discussions.

The WATF Communications Platform, used to facilitate regional communication between fisheries enforcement officers in the FCWC region, has also been utilised by some of the NWGs to add focal points from partner agencies where operational or due diligence activity will benefit. This will build greater awareness and insight into illegal fishing within the region, and allow for direct responses to queries.

Several of the NWGs have also established their own communications platform to allow for rapid sharing of information and generate immediate responses (e.g. WhatsApp groups). The open and secure nature of this communication channel and the involvement and awareness of multiple agencies challenges corruption.

Effective communication reduces misunderstandings and miscommunications, which can be a block to investigations or sanctions.

SHARING INFORMATION

Crosschecking and verification is essential for the prevention, identification, investigation and sanction of illegal fishing and crimes in the fisheries sector.

Information on vessel identity, characteristics, activity and ownership is critical for pre licensing and pre flagging of vessels. Remote tracking technologies and Maritime Domain Awareness systems also provide a wealth of information that helps to identify illegalities and non-compliance in the active fishing fleet. Different agencies often have access to different systems and the ability to pool information helps build a more accurate picture of vessel behaviour.

Enforcement capabilities can be strengthened by establishing simple mechanisms for information sharing and reporting, including sharing access or information from AIS and VMS.

Proactive interagency cooperation in fisheries enforcement opens the lines of communication between agencies allowing for better, more accurate and systematic information sharing between agencies.

Each NWG is in the process of developing a mechanism for interagency communication, including formal agreements to remove existing administrative barriers to information flows, and standard operating procedures to facilitate information exchanges in specific circumstances.







DEVELOPING CAPACITY

Interagency training sessions have taken place between most NWG members, both with direct support from the WATF, and as part of Navy-coordinated training (participation in large-scale maritime exercises, boarding-at-sea and inspection simulations, etc.). Interagency training not only reduces cost, but it ensures a shared understanding that can be invaluable in an operational context.

Fisheries authorities have also undertaken training of personnel in other agencies, in order to raise awareness on fisheries issues and teach their counterparts in other administrations to detect fisheries violations (e.g. in Nigeria over 200 navy officers and under-training officers were given lectures by the Federal Department of Fisheries in May 2018).

Frontline staff turnover has been identified as a potential challenge to sustaining interagency cooperation. To address this, and to retain institutional memory, ongoing training programmes have been recommended.

The WATF 'Toolkit' provides useful information and material showcasing best practices. This has been made available to the NWGs alongside awareness material on illegal fishing and fisheries related crime to increase knowledge and understanding of the issues and challenges.

MANAGING RESOURCES AND TIME

National cooperation between agencies provides an opportunity to get best use and value from limited resources and capacity and to strengthen countries' abilities to increase compliance in the fisheries sector and take action against the criminal element.

Time and resources for NWG meetings have been limited, so effective planning and prioritisation have been important to ensure that the right people participate and the discussions are focussed and result in progress.

FORMALIZING AND SUPPORTING THE PROCESS

Formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), or similar instruments, are important to ensure long term cooperation and systematic collaboration between agencies. They help to provide legitimacy to information sharing and protect arrangements that may have been built on individual trust or operational need.

An MoU between agencies provides a legal mandate and clearly defines areas where cooperation is required and specifies the information that needs to be shared for a consolidated front to combat IUU fishing. Some aspects of the interagency cooperation promoted through the NWG may need to be formalized in a policy or official agreement that will help to identify operational or procedural roles.

Where existing interagency cooperation mechanisms are already in place, the WATF is supporting the operationalization of these frameworks, where interagency cooperation is key.

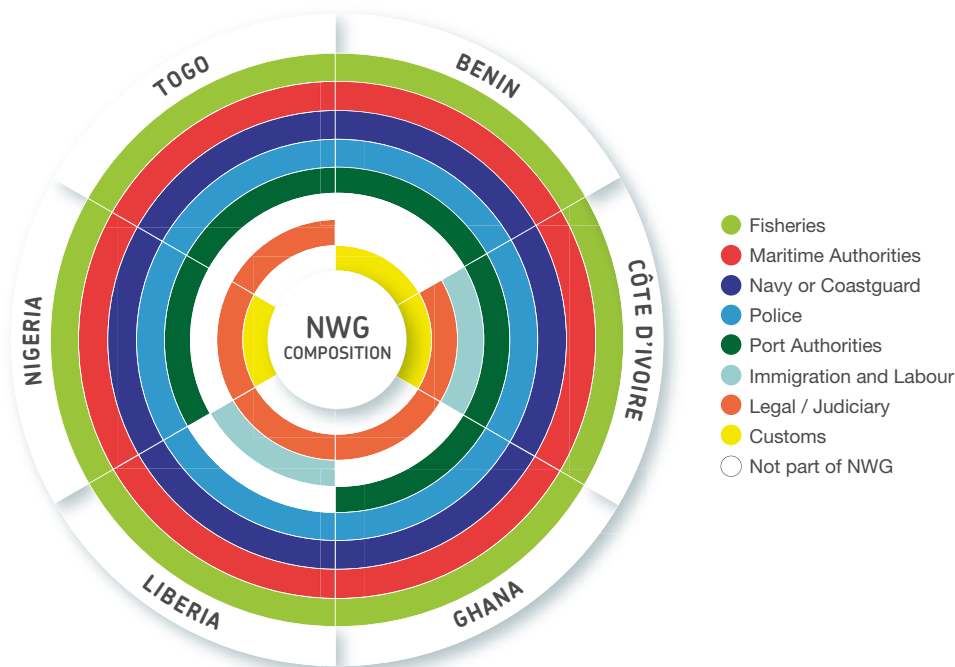
WHAT IS HAPPENING?

INTERAGENCY COOPERATION IN ACTION

The agencies involved in the NWGs vary from country to country depending on the legal framework and institutions. The composition of the group may change depending on the agreed areas of focus so e.g. when looking at the trade and processing of fish it will be essential to involve customs and trading standards agencies, but these agencies may not be involved in monitoring of vessel activity on AIS or decisions on port access.

The diagrams below and on the following pages only represent the main agencies generally involved in the FCWC region, while other agencies (environment, health, veterinary services, air force, foreign affairs, etc.) may also be involved in some member States, either as part of the NWG or on an ad-hoc basis.

THE CURRENT COMPOSITION OF THE WEST AFRICA TASK FORCE NATIONAL WORKING GROUPS



CURRENT ACTIVE AREAS OF COOPERATION

This table provides a snapshot reflecting the situation as of June 2018 following an assessment and from feedback through NWG meetings. Areas of cooperation are constantly evolving depending on local need, existing partnerships and opportunities.







	Benin	Côte d'Ivoire	Ghana	Liberia	Nigeria	Togo
Evaluation and decision making						
Joint evaluation and checking for vessel licensing			●	●	●	
Joint evaluation and checking for vessel flagging			●		●	
Routine sharing of information	●	●	●	●	●	●
Case evaluation and investigations	●		●	●	●	
Operational activity						
Pre fishing inspections			●			
Joint planning of at sea patrols			●	●	●	●
Joint at sea patrols with Fisheries Inspectors onboard		●	●	●		
Joint operations	●	●				●
Monitoring of AIS		●	●	●	●	
Port inspections to investigate a suspected violation		●	●		●	
Communication and capacity building						
Interagency WhatsApp group	●	●			●	●
Online communication platform	●	●			●	●
Participation by non-fisheries agencies on the WATF communications platform	●	●	●	●	●	●
Joint training activities	●	●	●	●	●	●
Training on fisheries issues for other agencies			●	●	●	
Development of interagency cooperation						
Regular routine NWG or existing interagency meetings	●	●	●	●	●	●
Pre-existing interagency mechanism in place			●	●		●
Bilateral MoUs between fisheries and other agencies		●	●		●	
Multilateral MoU in place	●	●	●	●	●	●
Resources/funding for interagency cooperation mechanism secured			●			
Political support to interagency cooperation secured	●	●	●		●	●

- Established
- Developing
- Not established

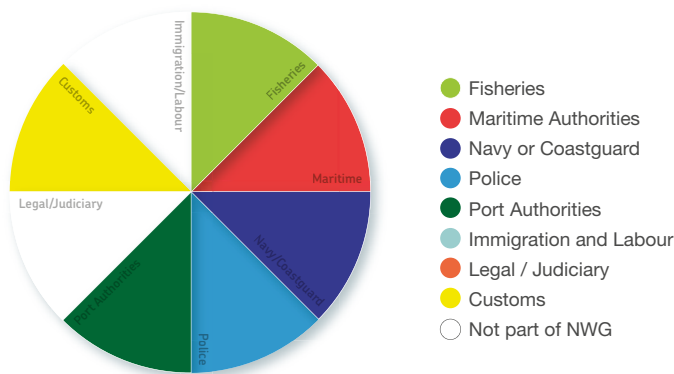


BENIN



Length of coastline (km)	121
Area of EEZ (km²)	30,024
Contribution of fish to animal protein consumed	31.3%
Contribution of fisheries to GDP	2.42%
Bottom trawlers	5 
Shrimp trawlers	- 
Pole and line vessels	7 
Tuna purse seiners	3 
Sardine purse seiners	- 
Longliners	- 

INTERAGENCY COOPERATION IN BENIN



The Préfecture Maritime was established by Decree in 2014 and is in the process of being operationalized. The plan is for it to work on broader maritime issues and related enforcement actions, including on fisheries-related issues.

The WATF NWG will work as a technical arm of the Préfecture Maritime to address fisheries enforcement issues and broader fisheries crimes. Information sharing has been the main activity to date with reports and information relevant to fisheries enforcement shared with members. A WhatsApp group has been developed to facilitate real time information sharing and faster responses.

Joint operations have included patrols and inspections. Fisheries inspections at sea are usually conducted in collaboration with the Naval Forces and the Special Unit of the Maritime and River Police.

Benin is the first WATF country where the NWG has been formalized through a Ministerial order.

Cotonou sees a lot of reefer traffic, which represents a challenge for fisheries MCS. During the last NWG meeting in May 2018, decision was made to strengthen collaboration between the fisheries department and the Port Authority to facilitate the work of fisheries inspectors in the port area.

CASE STUDY: CRACKDOWN OPERATION TO SEIZE ILLEGAL GEAR

Joint operations between the Fisheries Department and the Navy in December 2017 targeted the seizure of illegal pair trawl gear used by artisanal vessels. Bottom pair trawling is banned in Benin, as the technique is known to cause extensive damage to the seabed as two canoes drag the trawl. A non discriminatory fishing technique pair trawling is also considered to overexploit and damage fish stocks as it catches undersized fish.







The operations took place in three locations along the Benin coast: the channel of Cotonou, Ouidah and Grand-Popo. 12 gears were seized with mesh sizes of 5 to 10 millimeters, below those authorized, which are normally 70 mm for fish and 50 mm for shrimp.

The interagency cooperation enabled shared information to be utilised to target a joint operation. Fisheries inspectors were able to join a Navy patrol vessel to reach and inspect the illegal fishing activity.

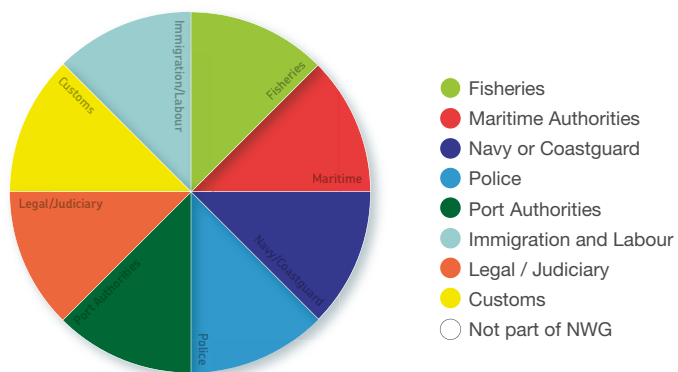


CÔTE D'IVOIRE



Length of coastline (km)	515
Area of EEZ (km ²)	174,545
Contribution of fish to animal protein consumed	38.7%
People employed	97,102
Contribution of fisheries to GDP	0.43%
Bottom trawlers	29 
Shrimp trawlers	- 
Pole and line vessels	1 
Tuna purse seiners	49 
Sardine purse seiners	21 
Longliners	2 

INTERAGENCY COOPERATION IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE



The NWG is building on an existing cooperation between Fisheries, the Navy and the Maritime Affairs Authority.

Members routinely share information such as lists of licensed vessels, and communicate via phone and email. The option to establish an internal and secure communications platform is under consideration.

The NWG is awaiting formal establishment through a Decree and this will provide further opportunity to support interagency cooperation in the country.

Abidjan being a major tuna port, emphasis is put on in-port inspections of fishing vessels and reefers. The work of Fisheries Inspectors is greatly facilitated by the centralization of fishing-related activity in a dedicated terminal of the port, where they have an office. One of the outcomes of the last NWG meeting in April 2018 is that Côte d'Ivoire will set up a task force dedicated to increasing the efficiency of port inspections.

CASE STUDY: JOINT AT SEA PATROLS RESULT IN ARRESTS AND FINES

The Fisheries Department and the Navy conducted seven joint patrols during 2016 to 2017 which had a notable deterrent effect, with a decrease in number of trawlers operating illegally in restricted areas.







The Fisheries Department provided information to the Navy on locations where industrial trawlers had been observed fishing in restricted areas. This led to 30 fishing vessels being intercepted and fines of CFA 50 million secured for fisheries violations.

This cooperation was based on a structured cooperation agreement between the Navy and Fisheries Authorities. Côte d'Ivoire is currently reviewing this agreement as part of NWG discussions in order to improve cooperation between the two agencies, mainly by streamlining the patrol planning process.

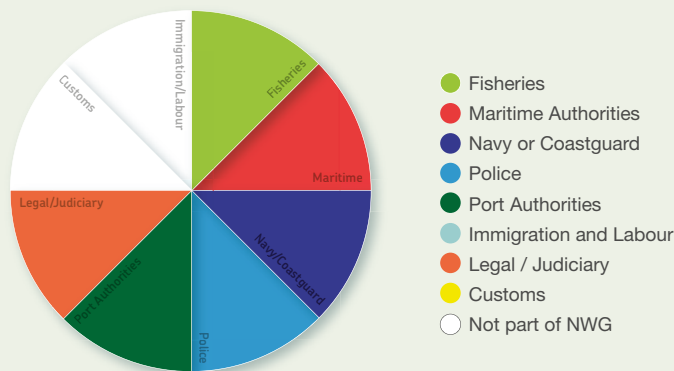


GHANA



Length of coastline (km)	539
Area of EEZ (km²)	224,908
Contribution of fish to animal protein consumed	51.9%
People employed	645,000
Contribution of fisheries to GDP	1.2%
Bottom trawlers	65 
Shrimp trawlers	- 
Pole and line vessels	11 
Tuna purse seiners	33 
Sardine purse seiners	- 
Longliners	- 

INTERAGENCY COOPERATION IN GHANA



The Fisheries Enforcement Unit (FEU) provides effective interagency cooperation. Established in 2013, and currently involving Fisheries, Navy, Maritime and Police officers. The FEU has provided a focus for operational cooperation including at-sea patrols, electronic surveillance, prosecution of fisheries infractions and community sensitization.

The FEU operates with a dedicated budget from the government. It conducts regular meetings to plan operations and joint actions. There is regular sharing of information through minutes of meetings, activity reports and monthly reports.

WATF NWG activities have encompassed a wider group of agencies, offering the potential to enhance and expand the existing scope of fisheries cooperation.

Recent capacity building activities involving NWG members (February 2018) focused on improving the use of Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) platforms for fisheries enforcement, and strengthening of interagency information sharing.

CASE STUDY: LICENSING DUE DILIGENCE REDUCES TRAWLER FLEET CAPACITY

The Ghana national fisheries management plan requires a significant reduction in the trawler fleet. A process of due diligence was employed to identify high-risk vessels and remove them from operations. Vessels that had been identified fishing illegally or violating other regulations such as vessel safety were the primary focus of this joint exercise.







Information was shared between agencies including the compliance history of vessels, IUU vessel lists, VMS tracks, AIS tracks, due diligence reports supplied by the WATF and safety records.

Elimination of the highest risk trawlers contributed to an overall reduction in the trawler fleet from 97 to around 50 vessels.

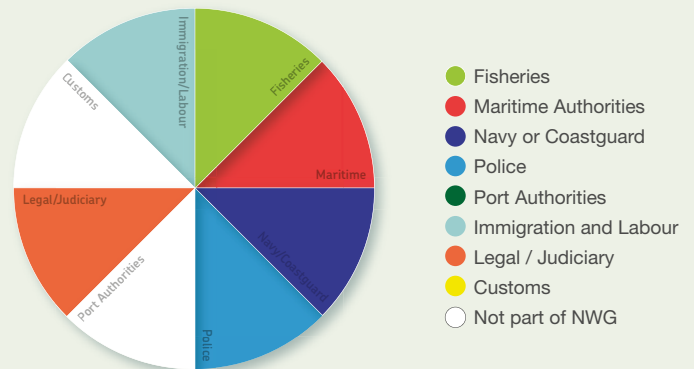


LIBERIA



Length of coastline (km)	579
Area of EEZ (km²)	246,152
Contribution of fish to animal protein consumed	14.9%
People employed	790,000
Contribution of fisheries to GDP	3%
Bottom trawlers	2 
Shrimp trawlers	- 
Pole and line vessels	- 
Tuna purse seiners	36 
Sardine purse seiners	- 
Longliners	- 

INTERAGENCY COOPERATION IN LIBERIA



Interagency cooperation in Liberia was first established in 2011 through the establishment of the Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance Coordination Committee (MCSCC).

This group, established by MoU, included Fisheries, Coast Guard, Maritime, Finance, Immigration, Justice and Port Authority. In practice however, while cooperation between Fisheries and Coast Guard was operationalized through information sharing and joint patrols, other agencies generally only became involved during cases of illegal fishing.

At the end of 2017, the Government of Liberia through a new Fisheries Act established fisheries as an independent authority, the National Fisheries and Aquaculture Agency (NaFAA), with several relevant Ministries / agencies on the Board. This presents a new opportunity and era for Liberia interagency cooperation, and an updated MoU is now in development.

CASE STUDY: INVESTIGATION OVER DETAINED VESSEL







A fishing vessel was detained by the Liberian Coast Guard¹ in February 2017 near the Côte d'Ivoire border. Flagged to Senegal, with Spanish ownership, the hold of the vessel was found full, and to contain several species, including 20 tons of shrimp. The vessel captain claimed that the fish was not caught in Liberian waters, and that it had transhipped its catch from another vessel in Côte d'Ivoire – where transhipment at sea is illegal.

Information was shared between the Liberia Coast Guard, Fisheries and Maritime to investigate the case, with intelligence support provided by the WATF. Cooperation and information sharing with Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal provided further information to support the investigation.

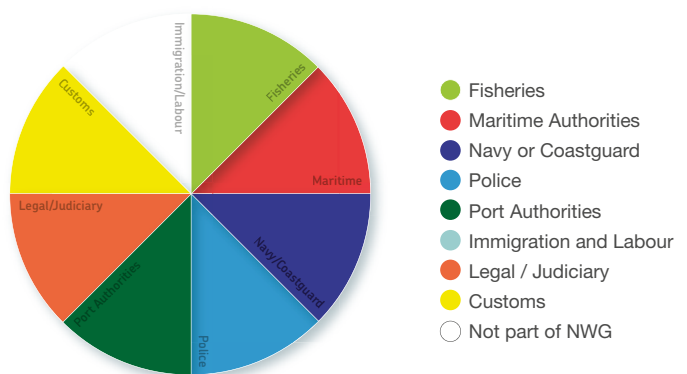
¹ The Liberia Coast Guard were operating on board the Sea Shepherd Global vessel *MY Bob Barker*



NIGERIA

Length of coastline (km)	853
Area of EEZ (km ²)	216,789
Contribution of fish to animal protein consumed	43.1%
People employed	790,000
Contribution of fisheries to GDP	0.5%
Bottom trawlers	13 
Shrimp trawlers	132 
Pole and line vessels	- 
Tuna purse seiners	- 
Sardine purse seiners	- 
Longliners	- 

INTERAGENCY COOPERATION IN NIGERIA



With shrimp being the main fishery, the monitoring of coastal areas represent a major challenge for fisheries enforcement. An active cooperation has been developed in Nigeria with regular sharing of information and strong communication between the lead agencies particularly Fisheries, Maritime and Navy. Formalization of the cooperation through the preparation of an MoU is underway, and the NWG will be expanded to include other agencies such as Customs in

order to support the monitoring of exports and imports, with a focus on fish entering Nigeria by reefers or by road.

Cooperation has helped to drive two significant regulatory changes, the requirement for AIS and IMO numbers on all fishing vessels licensed to fish within the Nigerian EEZ and those flagged to Nigeria. Support for monitoring of compliance to compulsory use of AIS is provided by the Navy.

CASE STUDY: INSPECTION AND DETENTION OF IUU LISTED YELE

A vessel thought to be notorious IUU listed YELE² was identified in the Nigeria EEZ in September 2017 using the name HAI LUNG. The vessel had been actively seeking port services in the West Africa Task Force region for the previous 12 months, and had already been investigated and denied port access in Togo and Côte d'Ivoire. The WATF had monitored her activity in the region through port visits and occasional AIS positions. In each port the YELE/HAI LUNG was inspected for fisheries and other violations, and port controls implemented to deny any services beyond essential port services.

Tracking of the vessel through the WATF led to joint action by the Nigerian Fisheries Department and the Nigerian Navy. The vessel was located at sea and brought into Lagos for confirmation of its identity and recent activity.

A joint inspection team led by the Federal Department of Fisheries in cooperation with the Nigerian Navy, Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), ascertained that it was the YELE, and the vessel was detained.







However no fisheries violation in the Nigerian EEZ could be identified and in March 2018 the vessel was released and required to leave Nigerian waters. It was subsequently arrested by the Liberia Coast Guard, then released again and next identified in Sierra Leone in May 2018.

² The vessel had previously operated under several other names, including RAY.

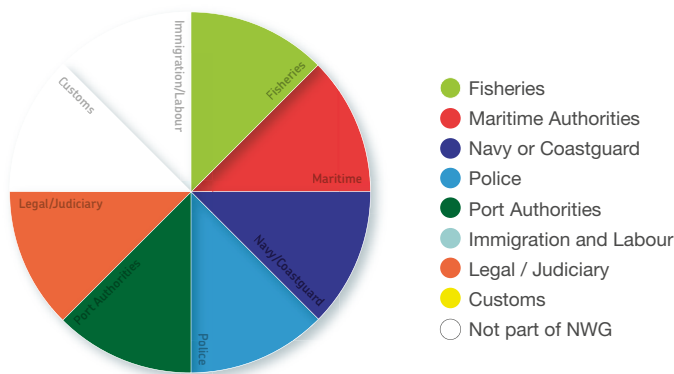


TOGO



Length of coastline (km)	56
Area of EEZ (km²)	15,375
Contribution of fish to animal protein consumed	40%
People employed	31,393
Contribution of fisheries to GDP	5.3%
Bottom trawlers	1 
Shrimp trawlers	- 
Pole and line vessels	- 
Tuna purse seiners	- 
Sardine purse seiners	- 
Longliners	- 

INTERAGENCY COOPERATION IN TOGO



The Préfecture Maritime was established in 2014 and is in charge of facilitating and coordinating all agencies actions at sea. It organises joint patrols on a quarterly basis, including with the Fisheries department whose role is to inform the patrol planning process and identify targets. Of all FCWC countries where the model of the Préfecture Maritime has been used to establish interagency cooperation on maritime matters (Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo), Togo is where operationalization has seen most progress.

The NWG was established in 2016 with a clear mandate of sharing information on fisheries activities and to strengthen agencies capacities to better combat IUU fishing. In 2018 it was decided that the NWG will work as a technical arm of the High Council for the Sea, the umbrella authority under which the Préfecture Maritime has been established.

The NWG has not yet been formalized however cooperation is taking place with details of violations found during navy patrols sent to the Brigade Maritime for investigation. Information on licensed vessels is shared by the Fisheries Department with members of the NWG.

As Togo is a party to the PSMA, the NWG will put emphasis on the development of risk assessment procedures for vessels requesting port access. NWG members have already started to improve the sharing of information, in particular prior notifications of arrival submitted by reefers, in order to facilitate pre-inspection analysis.

CASE STUDY: JOINT PATROL SEIZES ILLEGALLY TRADED SHARK FINS

In August 2017 the Navy of Togo noticed an unidentified vessel entering Togolese waters from Benin. The vessel registered as a target echo on their radar but they were unable to match the signal with any known vessel or other signal. In the absence of radio response, they decided to send a patrol in cooperation with the Fisheries Department to investigate.

The patrol located a transport pirogue and an inspection revealed several bags of shark fins without the necessary CITES import and export permits required for those species. The cargo was seized; the origin of the fins is not known but they were being transported from Benin into Togo.



AFTERWORD

The damage caused by illegal fishing at a national level is significant. It causes very real hardship to individuals who rely on fishing to support their families with food and income. It deprives governments of much needed revenue that could be used to spur national development of employment, infrastructure, education and health services.

Crime in the fisheries sector compounds the damage, fuelling corruption, undermining governance and the rule of law, bringing violence and human rights abuses into the industry and driving fish stocks to unsustainable levels.

The need for action is great, and the need in a known hotspot for illegal fishing, like West Africa, is greater still. Cooperation is an essential aspect of any action to end illegal fishing; it has long been seen that national fisheries authorities acting in isolation can have limited impact. The WATF has built on the regional cooperation of the FCWC and is supporting the development of interagency cooperation at a national level. This is needed to both support compliance to fisheries law and regulations and to enforce and sanction against the associated crimes that are taking place in the fishing industry. And, it is needed at all stages in the enforcement process, from prevention to identification, investigation and sanction.

The National Working Groups that have been established are not just talk shops. They are supporting existing cooperation and developing new connections. Interagency activity is taking place to inform port access authorisation, flagging and licensing decisions. Joint activity and operations have been undertaken and training is underway to build knowledge of illegal fishing and fisheries crime amongst partner agencies. These actions will all help the ability of our fisheries officers to end illegal fishing.

As we enter the second phase of the project supporting the West Africa Task Force, and with the EU funded PESCAO project starting in 2018, we are looking to build on the firm foundations that have been established. This will take place through:

- The formalization of cooperation agreements and procedures for information exchange between agencies
- Outreach to potential agency partners to encourage participation in NWGs
- Increased shared training to build understanding, capacity and trust
- Continued awareness raising of the harm caused by illegal fishing and the wider links to fisheries related crime
- Strengthened links between maritime security initiatives and related national and regional interagency mechanisms
- Development of joint regional patrols

The building of cooperation is not a straightforward endeavour. It depends on individual personality and agenda, as well as resources and institutional capacity. We have a solid basis for cooperation in the FCWC region and look forward to sharing further news of our cooperation with you in the future.

Seraphin Dedi Nadje
Secretary General of the FCWC





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 and Stop Illegal Fishing with funding from Norad. By actively cooperating, by sharing information and by supporting interagency cooperation the West Africa Task Force are working together to stop illegal fishing.

For more information go to:

www.fcwc-fish.org